July 2013

Salt

The Art & Soul of Wilmington

Swept Away

Dive inside our All-Star Summer Reading Issue

Lee Smith

Clyde Edgerton

Jill McCorkle

Philip Gerard

Dana Sachs

Fred Chappell

Michael Parker

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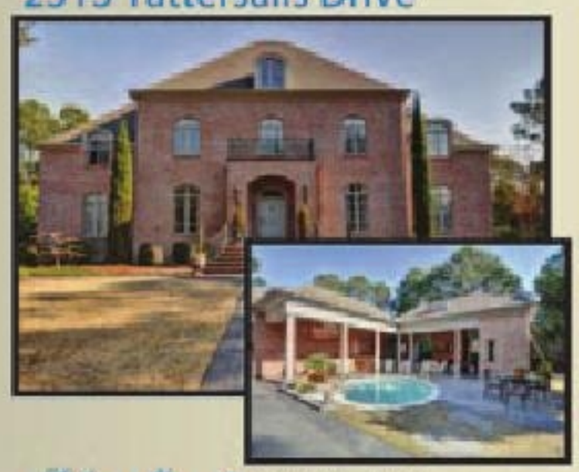
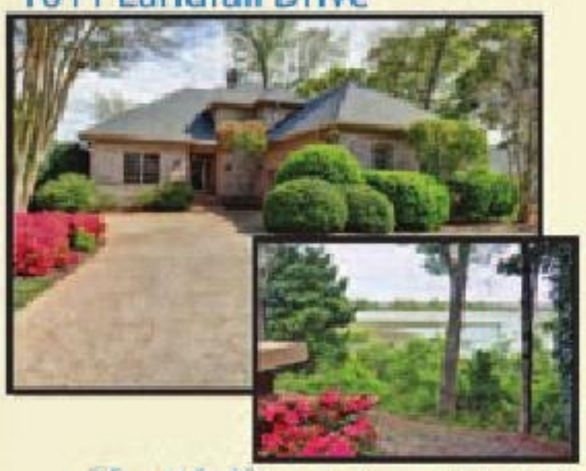


Glen Meade. Old World Elegance can be found in this all brick residence. Great outdoor living with fireplace, bar and mounted television and plunge pool! $990,000

1827 Verrazzano Drive

Landfall. Country French architecture on the #12 of the Pete Dye Golf Course. Features a chef's kitchen with a huge granite island. $979,000

1611 Landfall Drive

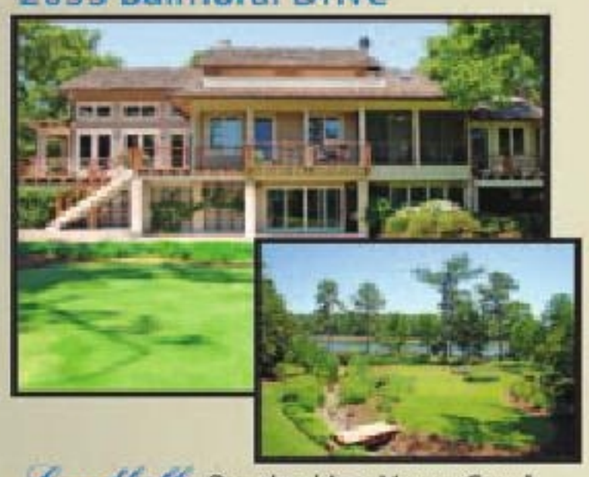


Landfall. Located on a high bluff overlooking the Intracoastal Waterway and Wrightsville Beach – all brick villa. $1,199,000

9 E. Asheville Street

Wrightsville Beach. Features great ocean views, 5 bedrooms, 4 full baths, upper and lower family areas and covered parking for 5 cars. $1,280,000

2033 Balmoral Drive

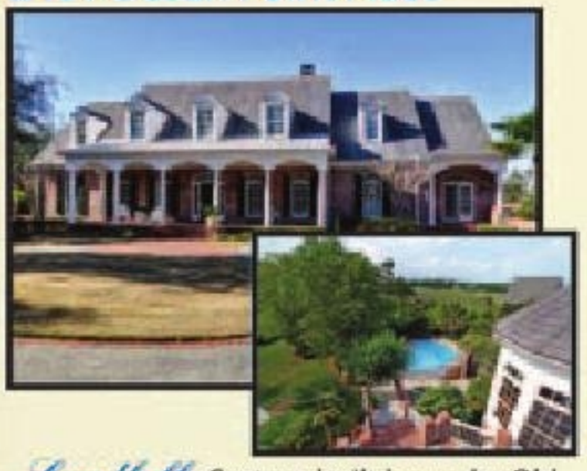


Landfall. Overlooking Howe Creek, this one acre home captures a spa-like feeling with an indoor 60' lap pool and hot tub. $1,495,000

6422 Westport Drive

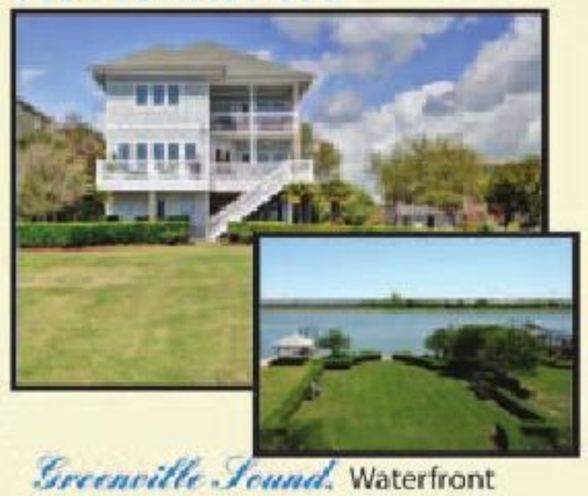
Shandy. Low country inspired residence under stately oaks with intracoastal views and a 30' boat slip. $1,595,000

2401 Ocean Point Place



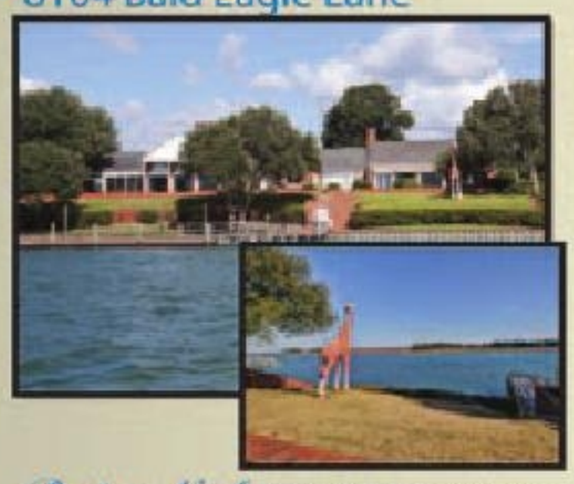
Landfall. Custom built home by Old South features 5 bedrooms, 5 full and 2 half baths. Covered porches take in views of Howe Creek & Nicklaus #5. $1,695,000

6804 Towles Road



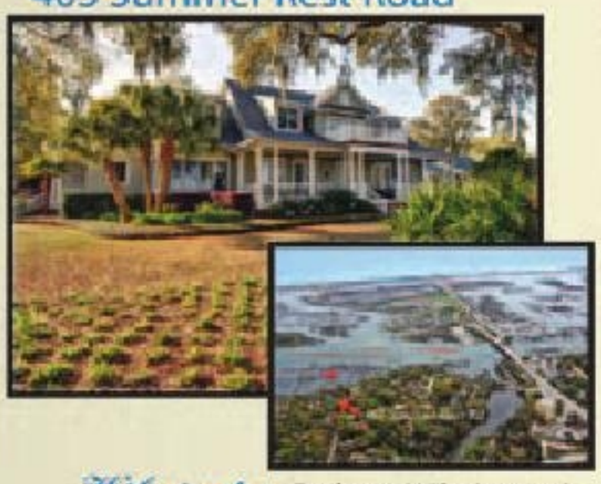
Greenville Sound. Waterfront living with unsurpassed views of the ICW and having your own 24' boat slip just steps away! $1,750,000

8104 Bald Eagle Lane



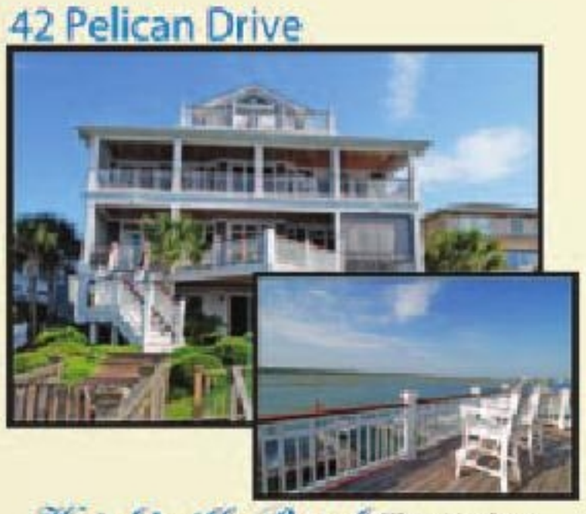
Porters Neck. This all brick residence is sited on 2 high bluff lots (200' of water frontage) overlooking Figure 8 Island and the Intracoastal Waterway. $2,295,000

403 Summer Rest Road



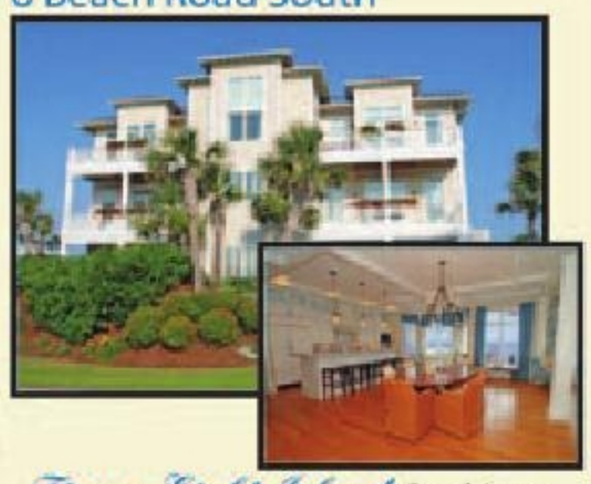
Wilmington. Perhaps Wilmington's most scenic waterfront address – offers the tranquility of yesteryear in this understated classic cottage with private pier for a 60' yacht. $2,995,000

42 Pelican Drive



Wrightsville Beach. This Harbor Island masterpiece evokes timeless Palm Beach design and three 34' boat slips with two 16,000 lb. lifts. $3,695,000

6 Beach Road South



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Salt *Magazine is published by* The Pilot LLC

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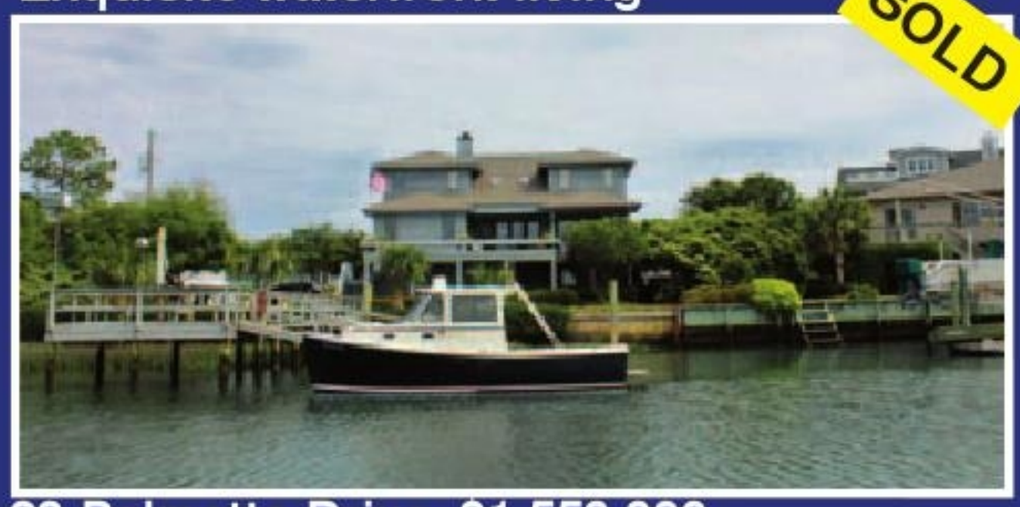

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JULY 2013

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Photograph this page by Cassie Butler Timpy

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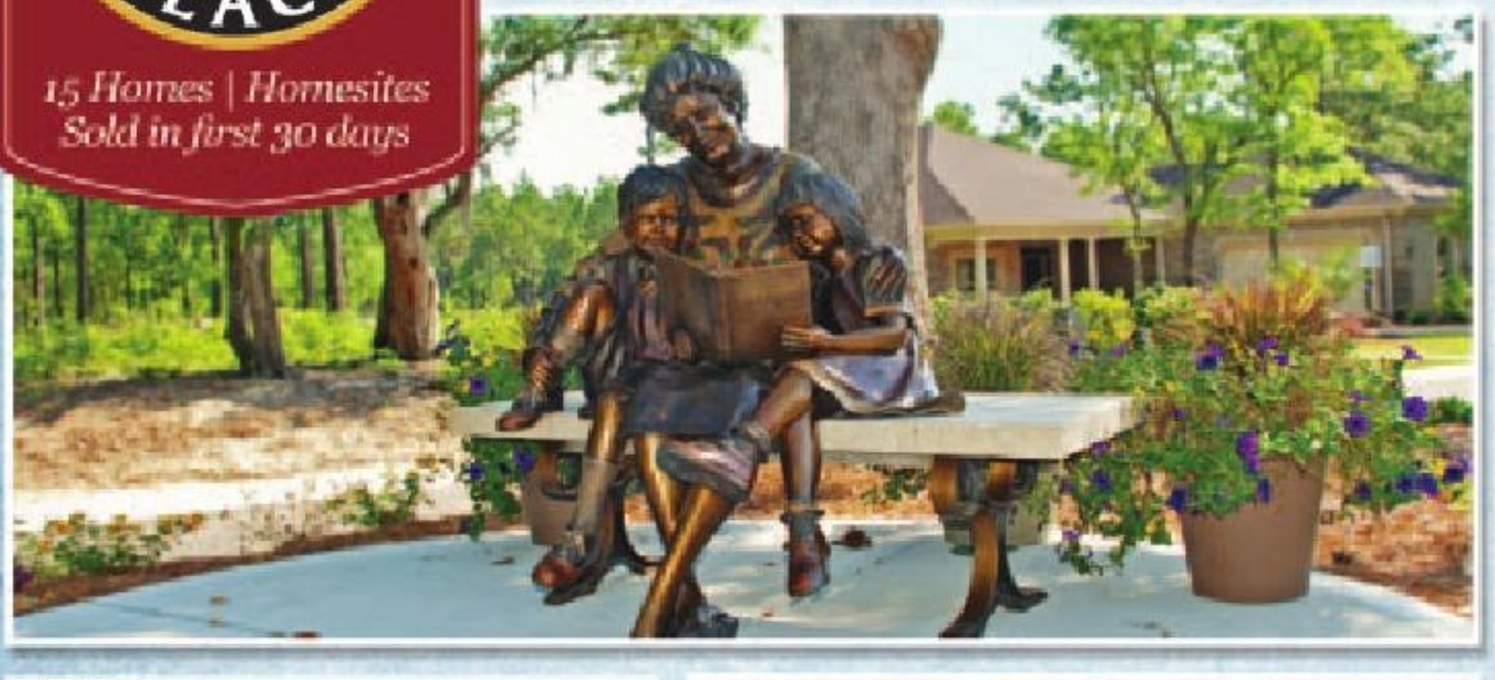

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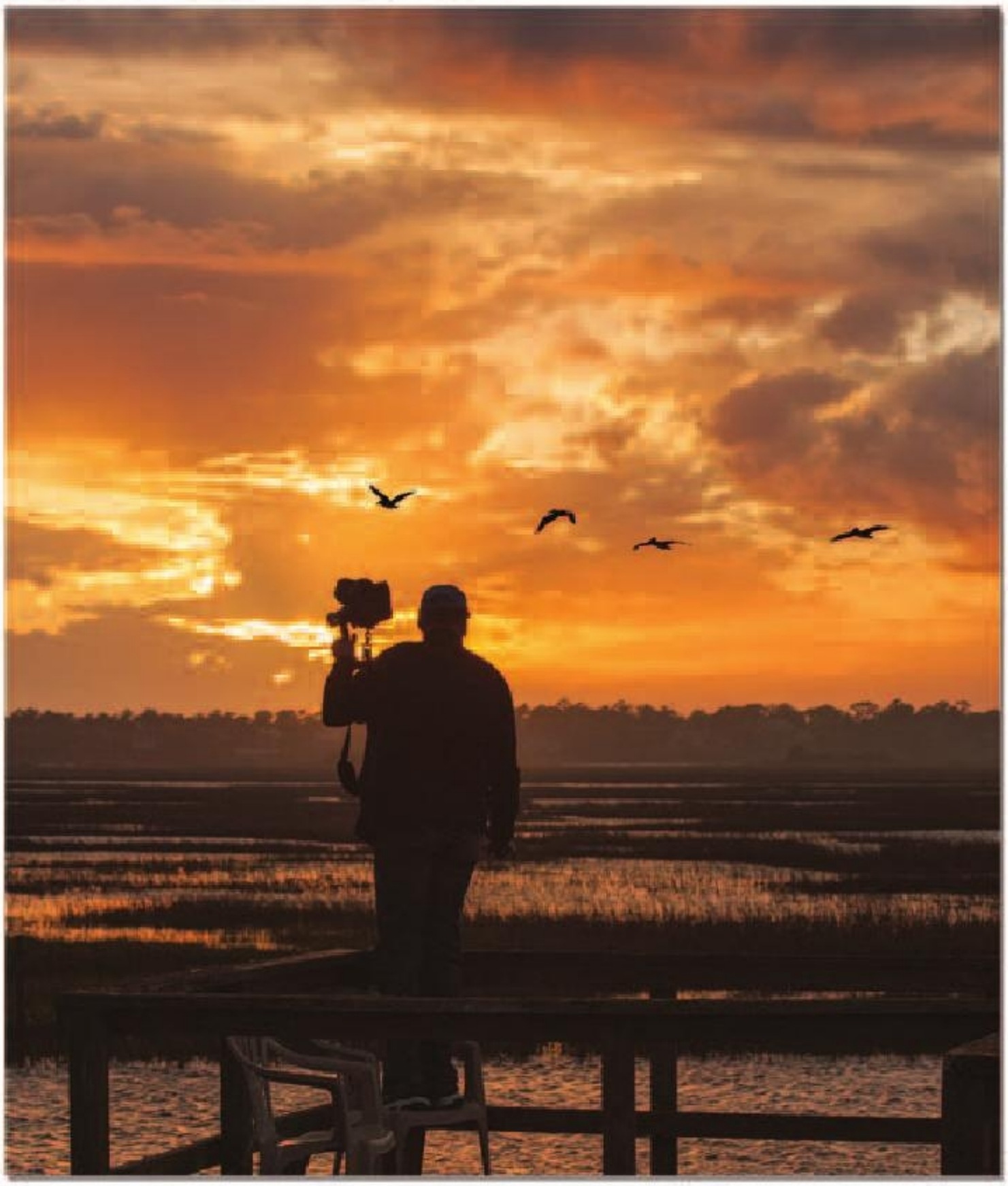

When the curtain goes up on nature's light show, an ordinary scene is often transformed into a breath taking moment.
Often anticipated but impossible to predict.
You have to be there.
I am.

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PHOTOGRAPHY

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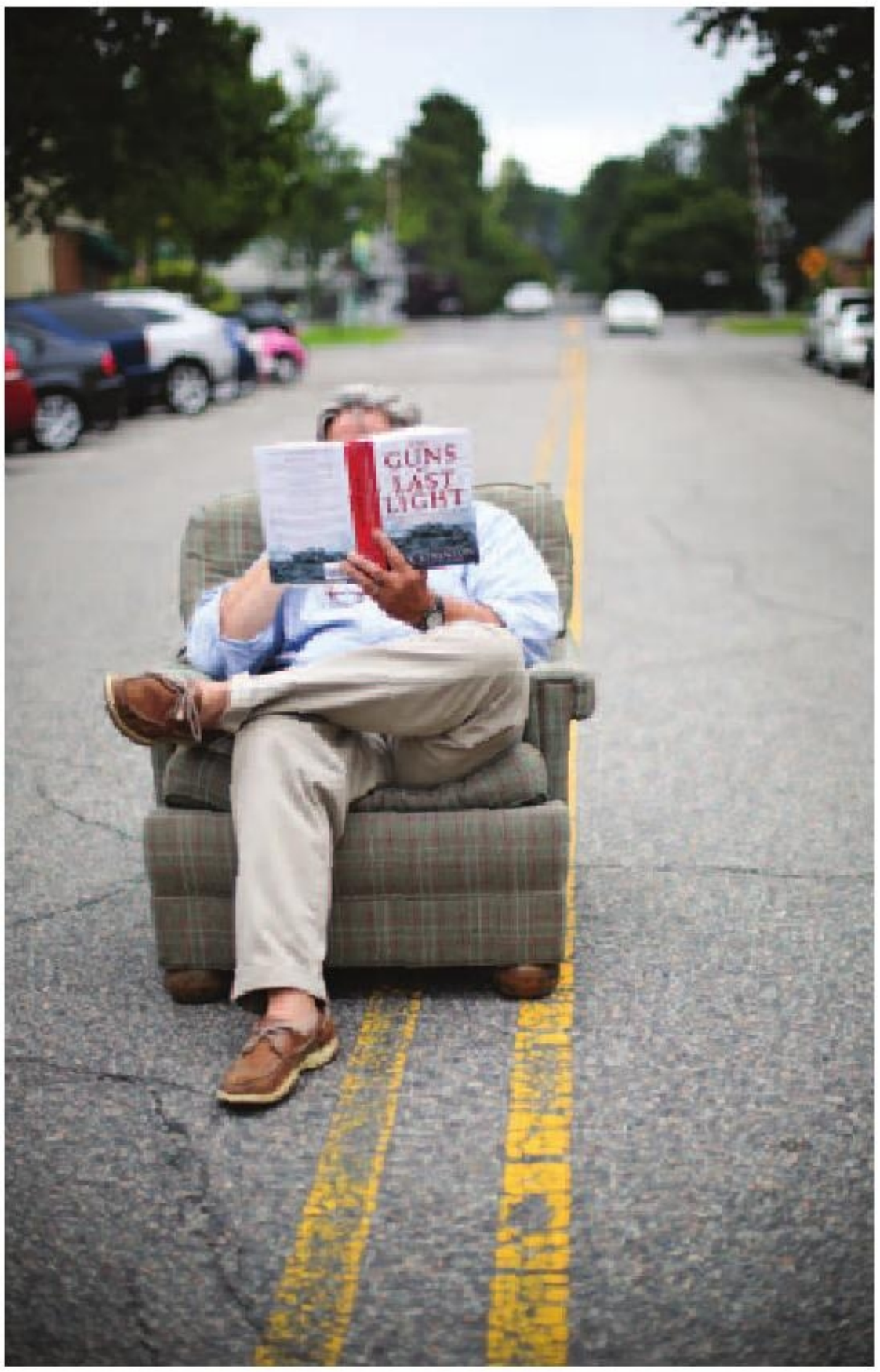
The Chair of No Return



PHOTOGRAPH BY CASSIE BUTLER TIMPY

By Jim Dodson

Last week we moved the art department and production center of *Salt* magazine from the cramped but oddly charming building our sister magazines in Southern Pines and Greensboro have called home for many years to a bright and cheerful production facility.

Among other things I shall miss is my secret bathroom in the back of a broom closet, which was anything but bright and cheerful. I used to tell visitors it was my personal wine cellar looked after by an unfriendly caretaker who is breeding a special kind of spider.

I'll also miss the thermostat that was so old it was impossible to determine whether the heat or the air conditioning was running.

Now we have a depressingly nice bathroom, and people who know what they're doing have their fingers on the thermostat. Life has suddenly lost all its adventure.

Luckily the Chair of No Return made the journey.

That's what I call the ancient club chair that I've owned for going on thirty years — the one in which, conservatively estimated, I've read at least several hundred books if not more.

Long past is the time I concluded a man may not be entitled to his own castle and moat, but certainly he can't get far in this life without a beloved reading chair. Mine's at least fifty years old and has had more facelifts than Joan Rivers.

The chair's internal springs are so shot that when you sit in it you sag to the floor and must have the leg strength of an Olympic long-jumper in order to get out, hence its official name.

Certain persons on our staff like to make sport of this venerable old chair with its unkempt springs and saggy bottom, especially with me wedged in it, and some confessed their purported surprise that either one or both of us made the move to the new production facility where I spend a third of my time. (Luckily, at our new editorial office on Front Street here in Wilmington, I have a "new" used armchair from the good people at The Ivy Cottage that bears all the same faded charm and dowdy potential as the original Chair of No Return — which, let's face it, would be too cumbersome to constantly haul all over this blessed state.)

As I pointed out to my sweet if culturally disadvantaged colleagues — New Chair Nazis, as I fondly think of them — I have a long and politely checkered history with the original Chair of No Return, convinced beyond any doubt that man across the ages has always needed a chair he could call (and befoul) his own.

Consider the divine right of kings and their ancestrally inherited thrones, which eventually led to husbands and their divinely private throne rooms. Where would the dads of this world be without a La-Z-Boy recliner of their very own?

Mine's not fancy at all, as I say, just a conventional club chair you might find in any venerable London men's club where the members are dying off by the hour and the carpet smells faintly of cat pee. But don't be fooled by its humble appearance; the Chair of No Return is actually a time capsule that holds fine memories of literary treasures and a whole lot more, including an amazing assortment of things that fell into its spring works over the decades and fell out when I rolled it over in order to move it. Here's a mercifully brief inventory:

One striped tube sock from my 1967 Little League team, the Pet Dairy Dodgers.

A letter I wrote (but evidently forgot to mail) to *Playboy* magazine's "Miss January" of 1969 conveying my utmost devotion and admiration for her stunning, uh, smile.

A moderately preserved brown mouse.

A Day-Glo orange golf ball, circa 1975.

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A faded cardboard coaster swiped from the bar at Rules in Covent Garden, Graham Greene's favorite hangout.

Snapshots from a nude beach in France and other stuff I can't mention in a family magazine.

Good old Marjorie Huddlemath gave me this chair in the spring of 1968 after her husband, Donald, kicked the bucket and she grieved by quickly redecorating his den. She was our crusty neighbor and the only true Yankee on my parents' block in those days, a Michigan woman of strongly held and sometimes crazy opinions.

"Donald dearly loved that chair," she confided sentimentally the afternoon after I crossed the street to lug it home in order to save it from the Goodwill man. At that time it was covered with cracked green leather that resembled the skin of Godzilla. "It has quite a history, dearie. And you can have it if you solemnly promise you won't ever bring it back."

Thus the start of the chair's never returning.

Among other interesting details, Mrs. Huddlemath claimed the chair belonged to Gerald Ford's fraternity house back in Ann Arbor. Ford played center and linebacker on the Michigan football team, you may recall, and was the only president we ever had who made Eagle Scout and later fell down the steps of Air Force One. This is what happens, I suppose, when you play football without a protective face mask.

Many years later I met Gerald Ford at a golf outing in Palm Springs and offered him my beloved club chair — now recovered in a discreet clubby houndstooth cloth — for his presidential library, specifically referencing Marjorie Huddlemath.

"Oh, lord. I remember her. That woman is crazy," he told me. "I wouldn't give that chair to Leonid Brezhnev. God only knows where it's been and who or what's been in it since it left the frat house!"

OK, I completely made that up. The truth is, I never met Jerry Ford or even Leonid Brezhnev for that matter, though I did briefly belong to the Guilford County Young Republicans back in the days of tube socks and my enduring love for Miss January. But that's another story.

Not to put too fine a point on this business, I certainly know where the Chair of No Return has been over the past thirty-odd years because I've dragged that sucker up and down the East Coast at least three times and it's never-ever let me down — or up very easily. As I said from the outset, it's central to my reading life and I wouldn't sink, you'll pardon the expression, to getting rid of it now that it's even shabbier and showing its age even more than I am.

You see, when I sit in it, which is daily, and whenever I write this column, I have unusually strong opinions just like Mrs. Huddlemath.

For instance, right this minute I'm sitting here thinking someone has to do something about all these people walking around with insanely white teeth. If the good lord had meant human beings to have teeth as white as a fluorescent lightbulb in an undisclosed CIA interrogation room, he would have made us all *People* magazine celebrities and TV anchor people.

I saw a commercial the other day featuring tiny Olympian Mary Lou Retton and rangy former NBA star Bill Walton, for example, and have no idea what they were selling — radioactive toothpaste? Clorox mouthwash? — but their teeth were so unnaturally white I had to put on sunglasses just to find the remote and change the channel.

See what I mean? I must be channeling Marjorie Huddlemath or maybe even J. Ford from his happy no-face-mask Ann Arbor days before the burden of the nation's highest office fell on him and he took his nasty tumble down the steps of Air Force One.

Anyway, in a nutshell, that's why my beloved reading chair, the Chair of No Return, will always be with me and I remain blissfully immune to the uninformed opinions of insensitive colleagues who would like to see one or both of us go away and never return.

Now please step away, dear reader, because I'm eager to sit here and savor *Salt* magazine's first summer reading issue. Also, I have an important update to finally get off to Miss January of 1969.

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SaltWorks

Red, White and Blues

Cue the harmonica. The Cape Fear Blues Festival features performances by local, regional and national musicians at various Wilmington venues from July 26–28. This year's festival includes the return of the Cape Fear Blues Cruise — or is that booze cruise? — on the *Henrietta III,* live blues in local clubs, a blues workshop at Finkelstein Music, and an all-day blues jam. See website for complete schedule and band lineup. Info: www.capefearblues.org or (910) 350-8822

Cowabunga, Y'all

Cucalorus returns in November. Meantime, its sun-loving cousin will pay us a visit. The second annual Surfalorus Film Festival brings the hottest new surf films to Carolina Beach, Wrightsville Beach and downtown Wilmington. Free, outdoor screenings will be held July 18–20. Event includes an outdoor board expo, live music and cold beer. What's not to love? Info: www.cucalorus.org.

When Nature Calls, Listen

Ever wanted a closer look at a bird-eating raptor? On Wednesday, July 10, make friends with a peregrine falcon, a barred owl and an Eastern screech owl at this Summer Evening Nature Series event. Times: 6 and 7 p.m. Halyburton Park, 4099 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

Bluegrass at Greenfield

Occasionally, when rock bands turn their amps off, magic happens. That's how Trampled by Turtles was born. Some pals from Minnesota — where else? — are a side project turned bluegrass sensation with a sound as unusual as their name. Don't miss the chance to see them live on Monday, July 29, at Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Show starts at 5:30 p.m. Tickets: $20/advance; $25/day of show. Info: www.greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

Peanuts and Crackerjacks

Who says baseball is a summer pastime? The Wilmington Sharks are home sweet home nine times this month. The fun happens at Buck Hardee Field at Legion Stadium. See website for schedule. Get your peanuts! Tickets: (910) 343-5621. Info: www.wilmington-sharks.com.

All Things Considered

Think about it. Community-supported radio couldn't exist without — you guessed it — community support. The WHQR 93.1fm Summer Pledge Drive will be held July 15–18. Call, go online or drop by WHQR, 254 North Front Street, Third Floor, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-1640 or www.whqr.org.

Big Bang Theory

Gather 'round, folks! The Battleship Blast is a spectacle to behold! Annual fireworks display lights up the night sky — and *USS North Carolina* — at this don't-miss-it Fourth of July celebration. Color show kicks off at 9:05 p.m. Come early. The view from Riverfront is stellar. Historic Downtown Wilmington. Info: www.battleshipnc.com.

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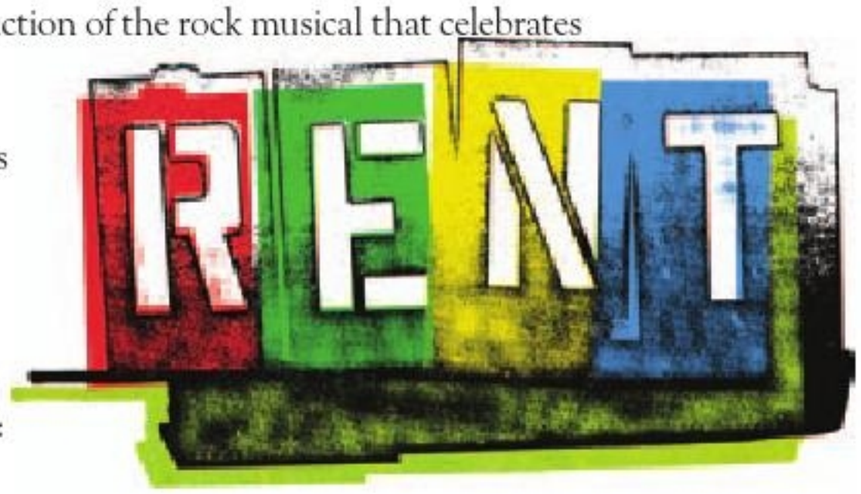
SaltWorks

Bohemian Rhapsodies

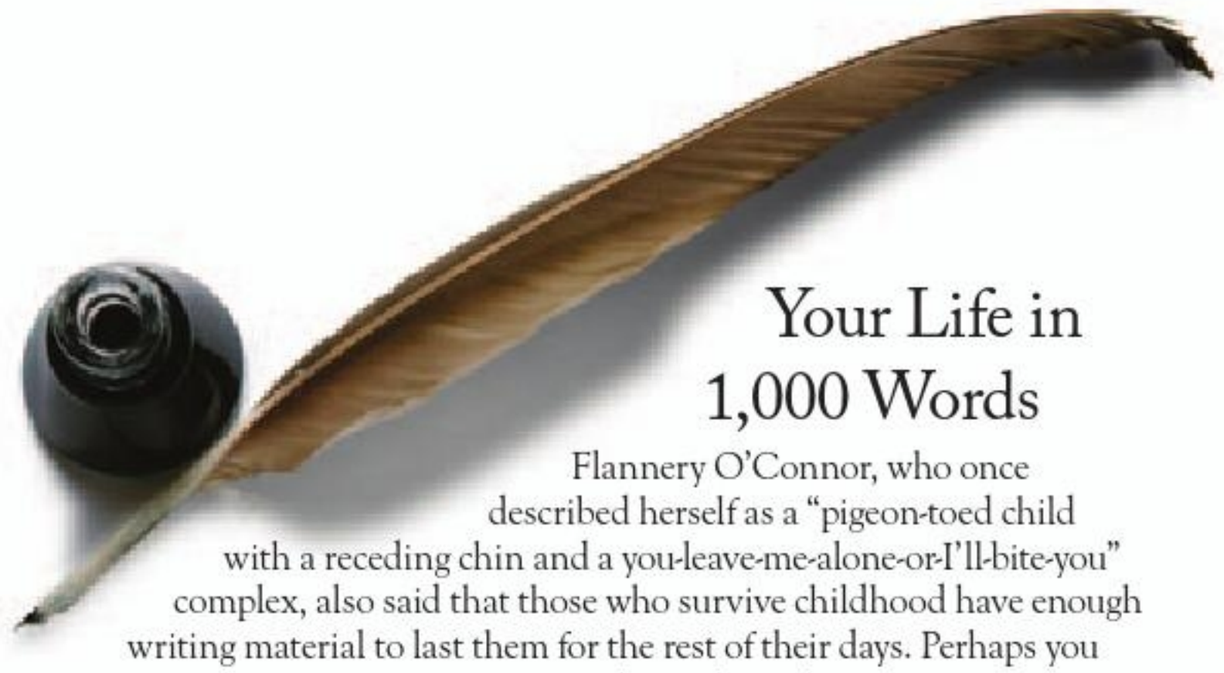
Your RENT-head friends have "other plans" for the better part of the month. Join them in the Lower East Side – aka Thalian Hall – for an Opera House Theatre production of the rock musical that celebrates *la vie Boheme* and the sweet love that makes it worthwhile. *Rent* runs Wednesday, July 3 through Sunday, July 21. Showtimes: 8 p.m.; 3 p.m. (Sundays).



Tickets: $25. Thalian Hall Center for the Performing Arts, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Box Office: (910) 632-2285. Info: www.thalianhall.org; www.operahousetheatrecompany.net.

Life is a Cabaret, Old Chum

On Monday, July 29, 5:30 p.m., Thalian Association and Cape Fear National Golf Course present *Thalian Association in Revue* – a cabaret show and fundraiser that celebrates Thalian Association's 225th anniversary. The show, directed by Tom Briggs, features vocal performances from its biggest hits and a preview of the upcoming season. Tickets: $47.95 (include cocktails and dinner). Reservations required. Cape Fear National Golf Course, 1281 Cape Fear National Drive, Leland. Info: (910) 202-5811 or www.thalian.org.



Your Life in 1,000 Words

Flannery O'Connor, who once described herself as a "pigeon-toed child with a receding chin and a you-leave-me-alone-or-I'll-bite-you" complex, also said that those who survive childhood have enough writing material to last them for the rest of their days. Perhaps you agree? Salt magazine invites you to share a brief chapter from your inimitable real life story – told in 1,000 words or less – by entering our 2014 *Salt* Magazine Memoir Contest.

The guidelines are simple:

Memoirs should not exceed 1,000 words

Original, unpublished manuscripts only

One submission per entrant

Deadline: October 1, 2013

How to submit:

Email your submission to ashley@saltmagazinenc.com using the subject line "Salt Memoir Contest"

Be sure to include your name, telephone number and mailing address in the body of the email

Winning entries will be published in *Salt* magazine. Contest is open to any resident of New Hanover, Brunswick or Pender County.

Surf's Up

Pipeline to a Cure is a Cystic Fibrosis Foundation benefit gala that's, frankly, totally awesome. In recent years, doctors discovered that CF patients who surf have significantly healthier lungs than non-surfing CF patients. As a result, a hypertonic saline solution was developed to mimic surf sessions. On Saturday, July 13, 6 p.m., mingle with pro surfer Tony Silvagni over cocktails and support vital CF research. Entertainment by Jack Jack 180. Jon Evans emcees. Tickets: $150. Country Club of Landfall, 800 Sun Runner Place, Wilmington. Info: (919) 845-2155 or www.pipelinetoacureeast.org.

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MOTHER AND DAUGHTER LEANN AND WHITNEY PARKER LOOK FORWARD TO WELCOMING YOU TO WHITLAUTER.

Ancient Dance in a Zen Garden

By Ashley Wahl

At 9 a.m., a distant mower hums a Low C while birds perform poems of summer from the treetops of Hugh MacRae Park.

What's the story? Morning glory and fresh-cut grass.

Yoga moms text while steering all-terrain baby strollers past purple wildflowers and pairs of dancing dandelions. A shirtless jogger demands a double take. He has the bronze, glistening body of a 20-something — lean muscles working like pistons — and the gray, willowy beard of a rebel sea captain. Ahoy! His tiny blue running shorts defy convention.

Beyond the fence where dogs play, a wire-haired Jack Russell terrier sniffs intently at a patch of dirt. His person throws a tennis ball, signals Wishbone back to Earth.

******

Martha Gregory sits beneath a picnic shelter taking slow, deep breaths. Suddenly, her electric coral lips stretch to reveal a wide, beaming smile.

"It looks like a Zen garden," the tai chi instructor observes, gesturing to the raked white sand below a towering pine tree.

Vaguely. But to Martha — call her Marty — all the world is a Zen garden.

Her pupil, a young archeologist, will be here soon.

******

Tai chi, not to be confused with chai tea — the spiced milk tea from India — is an ancient Chinese martial art practiced for health benefits and self-defense.

"They say it was based on the interplay between a snake and a crane," Marty explains with a playful grin that matches her twinkling eyes.

The story goes that a 12th century Taoist monk named Zhang Sanfeng once happened upon a snake and a crane in the midst of a heated confrontation. When the snake struck at the crane, the elegant bird shielded herself with her great, rounded wings. And when she stabbed back with her dagger-sharp beak, the snake twisted out of reach. Tai chi was born.

"It is give and take," says Marty of the slow, meditative movements. "Yin-yang."

Marty teaches tai chi and qigong — breathing techniques practiced to achieve mental tranquillity — at Cameron Art Museum, Wilmington

PHOTOGRAPH BY JILL MCILWAIN

Athletic Club, the New Hanover County Center for Aging, and through New Hanover Regional Medical Center's Healing Arts Network. "I work a lot with cancer patients," says Marty. "If they concentrate on what their hands and arms are doing, it helps them relax."

******

"I love colors," says Marty, whose prism earrings perform magic with the morning light. "My father was an artist. He studied in Puerto Rico with a very fine painter from Spain."

He also worked for the CIA, she adds. "Mother worked for the FBI."

******

Shortly after her father died, Marty began having panic attacks.

"I was in my 20s," says the former ballerina. "The attacks were debilitating."

Someone suggested she try tai chi, which quickly became her remedy.

"Tai chi is like water," she says with sage-like poise. "Running water is oxygenated and healthy . . ."

Keep moving, the tai chi classics say, like "water that supports a moving boat."

******

Watch Marty perform the Eight Silken Movements of qigong and see her glow.

"Imagine you're a Chinese dragon," she says, demonstrating the fifth movement.

Her aura is electric coral.

"We use empty fists when 'Punching with Angry Eyes'," says the sage — "like you're holding a June bug."

Days from now, the girl who digs up bones will be leaving for excavation in Spain and Serbia.

"My back is tight," says the tai chi pupil. "I'm anxious."

Teacher and student become snake and crane. The world slows.

******

Across the wooden footbridge, guarded by a honking Canada goose, three white ducks scavenge the Earth. Their reflections dance on the surface of the sparkling water. What dances below?

Front Street may be home base, but senior editor Ashley Wahl is prone to wander.

Funny Girl

Angelic Jordan Mullaney's devilish comic touch

By Gwenyfar Rohler

Many playwrights cite Edward Albee, George Bernard Shaw or even the venerable Bard. But for Jordan Mullaney, inspiration comes from Lauren Faust, the creative force behind *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*, the fourth generation of the animated television series inspired by a line of colorful plastic pony toys. Surprised? Don't be. Everything about Mullaney is unexpected.

To begin with, fandom launched her career as a writer. It started innocently enough, at a *Harry Potter* movie with one of her high school chums, Ryan P.C. Trimble. "Ryan and I went to an on-campus screening of a *Harry Potter* film in full costume . . . and we came down on stage and acted out a full scene — because that's what we do," Mullaney reminisces. Long story short, that evening led to their joining a newly forming *Rocky Horror* troupe downtown at Browncoat Pub & Theatre. Mullaney and Trimble got in on the ground floor, before the cast had even picked a name. Someone suggested they call themselves the "Pineapple-Shaped Lamps" as a nod to one of the audience call-outs during the film. And, oh, have they let their light shine!

In addition to shadow casting, the Pineapple-Shaped Lamps (PSL) entered the realm of sketch comedy, birthing "this magical thing" called Thursday Night Live (TNL), says Mullaney. Based on *Saturday Night Live*, even using *SNL's* hallmark cold opening and montage credit sequence, the series, which ran for five seasons at Browncoat, quickly became a hit in the Wilmington area. They have even toured comedy conventions. Most recently, PSL performed at the Chicago Comic and Entertainment Expo (C2E2) and the Florida Supercon. Their sketch show, now called PSL Presents, has since gone from weekly to monthly at TheatreNOW on South 10th Street.

While she's an integral part of the cast as a performer, the gig has also allowed her to write for an audience. "The first sketch I ever wrote was for 'sketch-cicles', a collection of short little one-liners," says Mullaney. She continues with a classic cartoon robot voice. "A robot comes in and sees a female girlfriend robot on the couch. The female robot goes, 'Honey, I am pregnant,' and the male robot goes, 'Abort! Abort!'" She blushes and breaks into a wide

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

grin, visibly pleased with her rendition.

But that was just the start. Her first full-length sketch, "Tammy," was when it all clicked. "In sketch writing it's more 'this event happens, this event happens, that event happens,' " explains Mullaney. "You have your central joke and you just build from there." The process is different from writing a feature movie script or a full-length play, which has a definite and specific plot arc. "Tammy has three or four beats in it. The central joke is the creepy girl behind the couch who keeps popping up and leaving — that's the first beat." The sketch builds on the repetition of the joke until it has been pushed far beyond the viewer's expectations.

Angelically beautiful with long blonde hair and milky white skin, Mullaney, just a year out of college, would typically be cast to play the ingénue, but that's not where her interests lie. While created to entertain young girls ages 3–6, *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* has developed a huge following across the spectrum, including among adult men — self-proclaimed "Bronies" (bros who like ponies) — and inspired a startling response of fan fiction, including Mullaney's own "Ask King Sombra" comic on Tumblr. As a character-driven animated comic, "Ask King Sombra" is arguably the perfect venue for her interests and talents. Mullaney became fascinated by one of the villains in the show, King Sombra, who had two minutes of screen time before he was killed off. She resurrected him and began the narrative comic.

"Now I can take over," says Mullaney. "I can make him whomever I want. Now there is a larger story arc." She adopted a similar narrative structure to print serialized comics like *Doonesbury*. Each installment has a small plot arc and a joke (first beat), but the installments add up incrementally (second and third beats) to a larger plot arc with recurring humor based on the developing characters' personality quirks. Pony performances in the comic have included parodies of *Spamalot* and *Les Mis*: "Do you hear the ponies sing? Singing the songs of angry mares?" At nearly 6,000 followers, and more than sixty new followers a week, "Ask King Sombra" is an outright sensation.

In PSL shows, Mullaney is frequently cast as a villain, probably for the humorous contrast with her fair exterior. It's also a metaphor that carries over well with her interest in *My Little Pony*. Mullaney's outer prettiness makes her appear sweet and innocent — almost pony-like. But like those darling little ponies, she is filled with inner resourcefulness and deeper reserves of strength than meet the eye.

Maybe we should ask King Sombra to tell us about Jordan Mullaney.

Gwenyfar Rohler fell in love with theater at Thalian Hall on her sixth birthday. She spends her days managing her family's bookstore on Front Street.

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The Saga of Charlie Soong

How Wilmington changed the life of a founder of a Chinese Dynasty

Fifth Street Methodist Church, now Fifth Avenue United Methodist, where Charlie Soong was baptized

By D.G. Martin

On November 7, 1880, a notice in the *Wilmington Star* announced an event that would ultimately change the course of Chinese history:

Fifth Street Methodist Church: This morning the ordinance of Baptism will be administered at this church. A Chinese convert will be one of the subjects of the solemn right [sic], being probably the first 'Celestial' that has ever submitted to the ordinance of Baptism in North Carolina. The pastor, Rev. T. Page Ricaud, will officiate.

That Celestial, as Americans then referred to Chinese people, was Charlie Soong, who would later become one of China's wealthiest and most powerful business and political insiders. Perhaps his children, the Soong sisters, are better known. One of his daughters, May-ling, married Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek who, after being forced from the mainland in 1949, ruled Taiwan until his death in 1975. Madam Chiang died in 2003 at age 105.

Another Soong sister, Ching-ling, became Madam Sun Yat-sen, wife of the Revolutionary leader who was recognized as a hero by Communists and Nationalists alike.

How Charlie Soong made his way back from Wilmington to China is almost as incredible as how he came from China to Wilmington and the Fifth Street Methodist Church. I heard the story from retired New Hanover County librarian Beverly Tetterton and Sue Hammonds, the church historian.

Sometime between 1863 and 1866, Soong was born on Hainan, an island off the southeast coast of China. In 1878, after spending time in Indonesia, he traveled to Boston to work at a relative's shop. The following year he ran away to a U.S. Treasury Revenue Service (forerunner of the Coast Guard) ship, *Albert Gallatin*. He may have been a stowaway at first, but Captain Eric Gabrielson took a liking to him and made him a cabin boy. When Gabrielson was transferred to Wilmington to serve as captain of the *Schuyler Colfax*, another Revenue ship, Soong followed. In Wilmington, Gabrielson introduced Soong to Civil War veteran Col. Roger Moore, a devout Methodist who introduced Soong to Wilmington's Methodist churches.

At the Fifth Street Church, during the first week of November 1880, Soong heard the powerful preaching of the Rev. Thomas Ricaud and responded to the altar call at the end of the service. "The whole congregation was riveted by the spectacle of a Celestial bowing at their altar," wrote Sterling Seagrave, author of *The Soong Dynasty*.

Afterward, Soong declared that he "had found the Saviour" and that he wanted to return to China as a missionary.

He was baptized the following Sunday.

"Dressed in his usual double-breasted Prince Albert frock coat, a conspicuous wig on his bald pate . . ." wrote Seagrave, "Reverend Ricaud spread a handkerchief on the step before the altar and knelt in prayer. Then he stood and placed his hands on Charlie's carefully pomaded black hair. Solemnly, the preacher baptized him 'Charles Jones Soon'."

Many speculate about where the name Charles Jones came from, but no one is certain. According to one account, when Captain Gabrielson first met Charlie and asked his name, the response, "Chiao-shun," Charlie's Chinese given name, sounded to Gabrielson like "Charles Jones." Soong later added the "g" to his name.

For a short time Ricaud became Soong's surrogate father, seeing to his education and working with Moore to arrange for training to prepare the boy for missionary service. Meanwhile, Soong found work as a printer's apprentice, an

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARK STEELMAN

The Soong family in Shanghai, 1917. Front: T.A. Soong. Second row from left: Ai-ling Soong, T.V. Soong, Ching-ling Soong. Third row from left: T.L. Soong, Charlie Soong, Ni Kwei-tseng, May-ling Soong.

experience that would prove to be key for Soong when he returned to China.

Moore and Ricaud contacted fellow Methodist Julian Carr, a prominent tobacco and textile manufacturer, to ask for help in paying Soong's tuition at Trinity College, a small institution in Randolph County that would later become Duke University.

Carr invited Soong to Durham, where, according to Carr's biographer Mena Webb, Soong charmed the Carr family and was eventually welcomed into their home "not as a servant, but as a son."

After a year at Trinity, Soong transferred to Vanderbilt University to prepare for his return to China in 1886 as an ordained Methodist missionary.

Mission service did not suit Soong. He felt that the crusty, conservative American Southerners who ran the Methodist missions in China did not treat him fairly or with respect. So he looked for opportunities in business. He knew that there was a shortage of inexpensive Chinese language Bibles. His experience in the Wilmington print shop gave him the confidence to establish his own Bible printing business. The venture's success opened up several additional business opportunities, the funds from which allowed Soong to raise his children and to send each of them to the United States to attend college.

Charlie Soong, 1881, as a 15-year-old at Trinity College

Thanks to his children, Soong's family influence was felt around the world, especially in China and Taiwan.

The old church where Charlie Soong was baptized caught fire not long after he left Wilmington and was replaced by a Neo-Gothic style building. In 1921, the church, now known as Fifth Avenue United Methodist, added an educational building and named it in honor of Charlie Soong.

D.G. Martin lives in Chapel Hill and wishes he could spend more time at his family's Wrightsville Beach condo. He has hosted UNC-TV's North Carolina Bookwatch *since 1999.*

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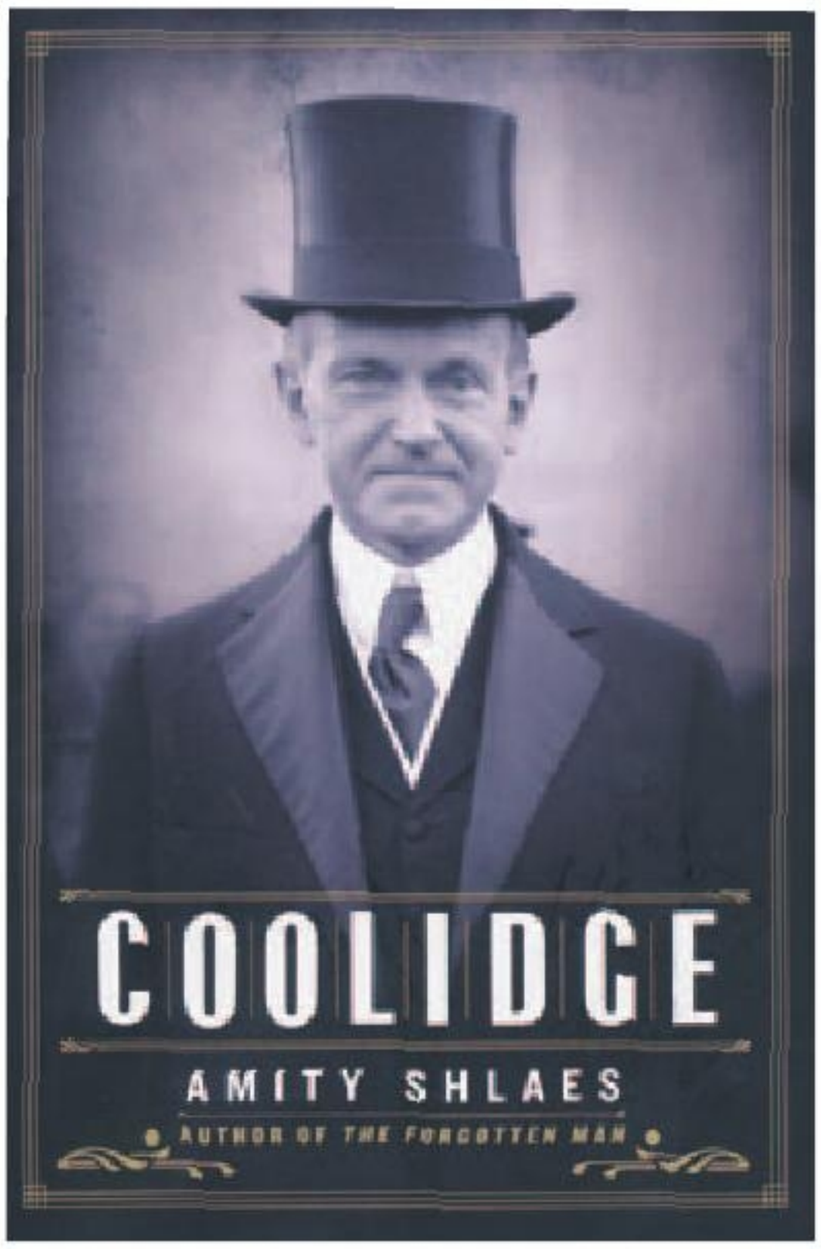
The Great Refrainer

Silent Cal Coolidge and the business of saying as little as possible



By Stephen E. Smith

Americans tend to indentify our media-savvy 20th century presidents with their most memorable soundbite — "I'm not a crook," "Read my lips. . . ," "I didn't have sex with that woman," etc. — but it's impossible to tell where Calvin Coolidge, the first president to address the American people via radio waves, falls on the oops-I'm-sorry-I-said-that scale. Silent Cal not only escapes being identified with any egregious misstatements, he escapes being identified with any utterance whatsoever. Indeed, the question most Americans would ask about Coolidge is: What did he say?

The answer, according to Amity Shlaes' new biography, *Coolidge: An American Enigma*, is not much. For Coolidge loquaciousness was a vice. All his life he made a point of saying as little as possible, even though he held more press conferences than any other American president, then or now. What he did say usually fell into the tomorrow-is-another-day category of self-verifying truisms: — "I am for economy, and after that I am for more economy." Also, "The business of America is business."

Under Coolidge's light-handed leadership the federal debt fell, the top income tax rate came down by half, the federal budget was always in surplus, and the unemployment rate lingered at 5 percent. Although Coolidge may have ridden the horse in the direction it was headed, there's no denying that during his administration Americans wired their homes for electricity, bought their first cars or household appliances on credit, took to the air in large numbers, submitted more patent applications than ever before, cut back on their nasty habit of lynching fellow citizens, quit the Ku Klux Klan in droves, lit the first White House Christmas tree and so forth. Shlaes would have us believe that most of the positive aspects of American life began to flourish during Coolidge's tenure, in large part because he said and did little. She dubs Silent Cal "the great refrainer."

In her extensively researched biography, Shlaes includes all the obligatory facts concerning Coolidge's rise to power — his sojourn in city offices and the state legislature, his stint as governor of Massachusetts, and in particular his handling of the long forgotten Boston police strike, the event that catapulted him into the national limelight.

In September 1919, the majority of the Boston police force walked off the job, leaving the city open to hooliganism and looting. Governor Coolidge held to a hard line when dealing with Samuel Gompers and the union, stating: "There is no right to strike against the public safety, anywhere, anytime," a stance that would later be adopted by Ronald Reagan when dealing with air traffic controllers.

Coolidge's three years as Warren Harding's vice president left the American people with little insight into what his policies might be when he assumed the presidency. They need not have been concerned. When Coolidge took over the reins of government, the country was enjoying unparalleled prosperity. As president, he worked to keep federal interference at a minimum. He opposed farm subsidies, preferring a loan program. He spoke out on civil rights, but did little to promote equal opportunity for minorities, and he ignored pleas for federal relief and flood control measures, even when his native New England was ravaged by natural disasters. In short, Coolidge was a president who strongly embodied the contemporary Republican view of small government — which raises questions about the timely appearance of Shlaes' "scholarly" work and the responsibility and

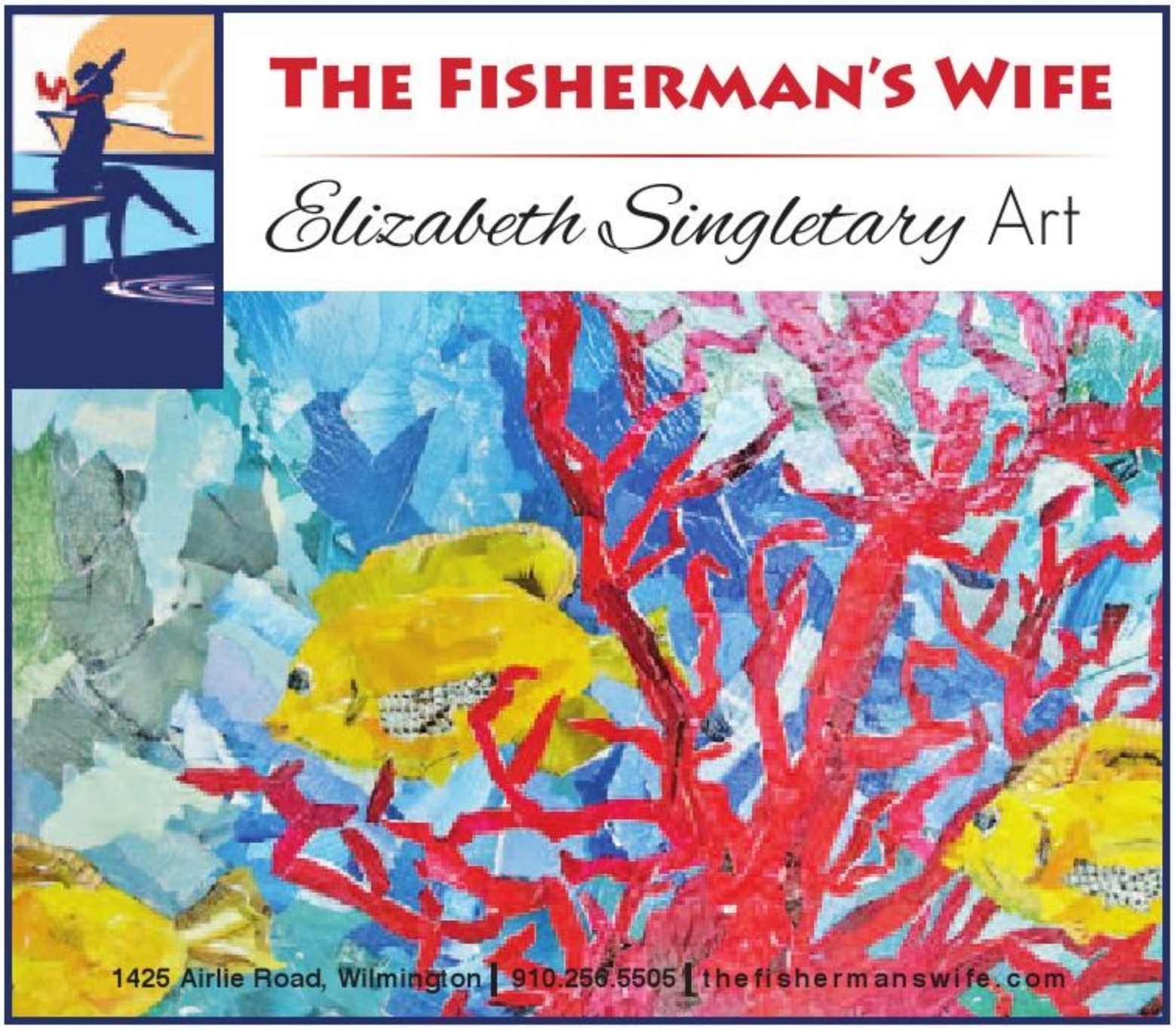
motives of the biographer writing during a time of intense political turmoil.

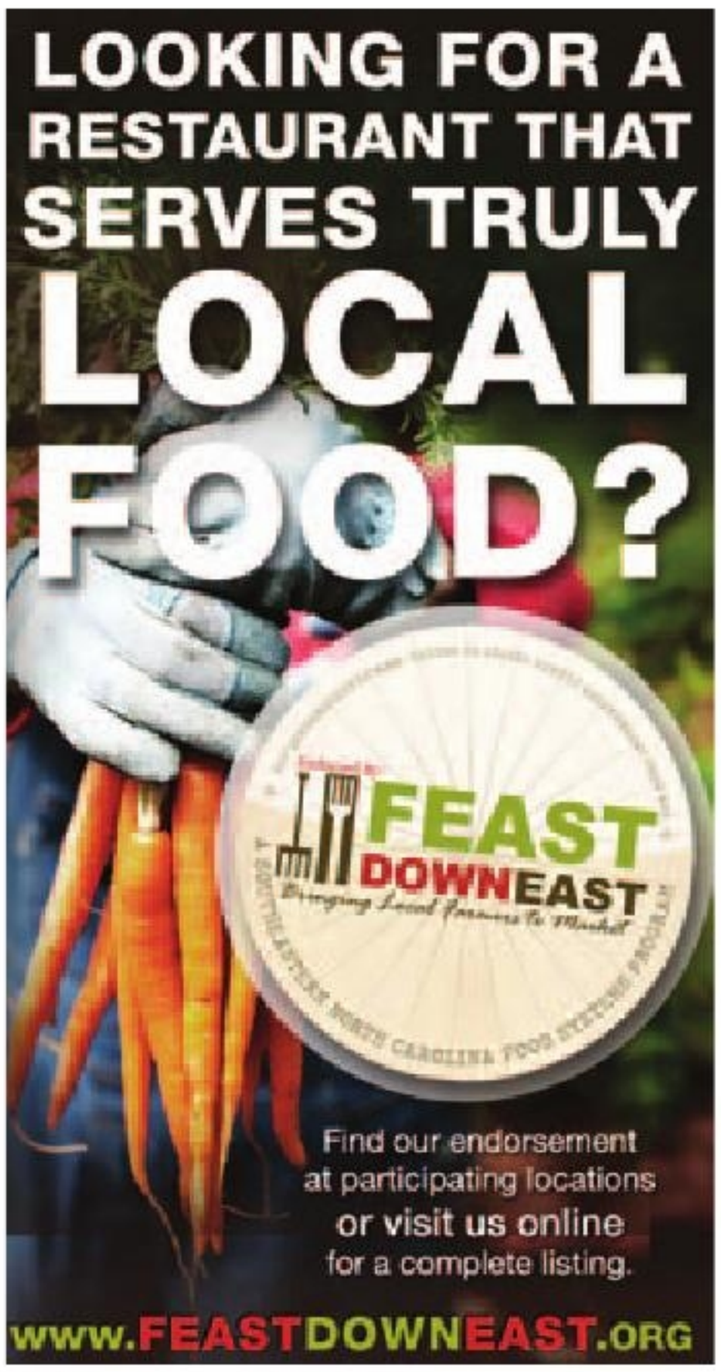
Ms. Shlaes, a syndicated columnist for more than a decade, is a former editor for the conservative The *Wall Street Journal*. She serves on the board of the Calvin Coolidge Memorial Foundation and is the author of *The Forgotten Man: A New History of the Great Depression*, whose hypothesis is that the New Deal only worsened and prolonged the Great Depression. In a recent editorial, she writes that Ronald Reagan isn't the only president who could right our teetering economic system: ". . . if you look back, past Dwight Eisenhower and around the curve of history, you can find a Republican who did all those things: Calvin Coolidge." She identifies Coolidge's conservative approach to governance as enjoying three advantages that shaped a thriving economy. First is the Budget and Accounting Act of 1921, which denied the president control over the budget. The second is Coolidge's determination to make austerity permanent. The third is Coolidge's belief that ambitious budget cuts would be accepted if he could "align" them with ambitious tax cuts — all gratifying information for those who share the conservative viewpoint.

As soon as *Coolidge* appeared in bookstores, a pundit no less than George Will wrote a column touting the virtues of Ms. Shlaes' biography and the strengths of character demonstrated by Coolidge, stating that if Barack Obama, "America's most loquacious president (699 first-term teleprompter speeches)," could learn from the Coolidge biography — and by extension, from the man himself — the country would come together in an orgy of love and thanksgiving. Shlaes' biography has been mentioned favorably by Joe Scarborough on *Morning Joe* and on other conservative news programs. Even the Raleigh *News and Observer* ran a letter to the editor touting the new Coolidge biography, reminding liberal readers that Ronald Reagan hung a portrait of Coolidge in his cabinet room.

Shlaes isn't effusively enthusiastic about Coolidge's record as president, but she seems to gently nudge readers into the inescapable conclusion that Silent Cal's approach to government is best reflected by today's Republican Party, such as it is. The serious reader, Democrat or Republican, might do well to read David Greenberg's *2006 Calvin Coolidge*, which fills in some of Shlaes' omissions and counterbalances her view of our 30th president.

Stephen E. Smith's most recent book of poems is A Short Report on the Fire at Woolworths. *He can be reached at travisses@hotmail.com.*

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Get Your Sawdust Here

and while you're at it, sugar, have I got a great beach read for you

By Ann Ipock

When I was 5 years old, I sold sawdust in a paper bag to our next door neighbor, Mrs. Gladson. She paid me a nickel and, boy, was I happy. Over the moon, even. Oh, it was in my blood — selling, I mean, not sawdust.

My parents owned two shoe stores, the Bootery and the Shoe Box, where I started working when I was 14. This was before all those silly labor laws were enforced. All I needed was a worker's permit.

Turns out I could sell more than just sawdust. I sold Bass Weejuns, children's Stride Rites and leather pocketbooks, Kiwi polish and dye jobs — no, not for hair and eyebrows — for matching *peau de soie* shoes and purses.

Over the years, I've sold Mary Kay cosmetics, Tupperware — "That's right, Ma'am, you can run your car over it and it still won't break!" — and Sarah Coventry jewelry. Though I *liked* the jewelry, I loved my title: fashion director. Artsy yet powerful, don't you agree? But my most successful sales gig had to have been the yard sale I hosted at age 8. I sold boxes full of old dolls, board games and stacks of books I'd read so many times I could recite them. I must have made $11.

As anyone who's heard me speak at clubs, functions and charity events knows, I still love to sell my books more than anything else on the planet! I just love selling! Something about that win-win situation: I have something you want, you have the money to buy it, we exchange friendly banter, and then we part ways. You're off to read your brand new book, and I'm off to buy more beautiful shoes.

Or maybe I'll buy something else. Since it's summertime, and I live at the beach, I'm looking for a new bathing suit that promises to make me look four sizes smaller, and a Coolibar wide-brimmed hat (my dermatologist swears it's the best thing since sliced bread). Or maybe I'll splurge for a new beach chair and some colorful flip-flops.

When I go to my favorite beach store, I can't fight the urge to help customers and tourists with their purchases, especially if a stack of my books are nearby. All authors are hungry for readers, honey. Don't let 'em pretend otherwise.

Here's what I do: I drape myself over my books at the check-out counter, sway my body wistfully and smile invitingly. If that doesn't work, I pick up a book out of the beautiful wooden box that my 85-year-old daddy (who calls me Author Ann) made me, complete with an engraved brass plate — we're still a quasi family business — and slowly turn the pages using my freshly manicured summer red nails, while laughing hysterically. This sales trick almost never fails and someone asks me what's so dang funny.

All this time, I'm listening to see if I overhear someone say *anything* about beach reads, which springs the inveterate sales girl in me to action, though there is a fine line between eager salesmanship and literally stalking.

I think back to another time, several years ago, when I actually did sell books to tourists in South Carolina, where my husband, Russell, and I were living at the time. Four friends from Georgia were on vacation, walking along the beach. They asked me to take their picture and I did. Then one of them remarked that I looked familiar. I told them my name and said that I write books. Oh, she grinned. Then she said she'd seen my books for sale in a store: Would I meet them there the next day? They'd each buy one and have them autographed.

"I can do you one better," I said. "I have a case in my car and you can buy some right now!" They squealed with delight, especially Rose, the ring-leader. (They must've been really bored, but I was flattered, nonetheless.) They followed me back to my car, whereupon they snapped pictures of me while I signed their books.

And just to think, all of this craziness began with a bag of sawdust.

Ann Ipock is an award-winning Southern author, humorist and speaker whose books include the Life is Short *series. She may be reached at amipock@ec.rr.com.*

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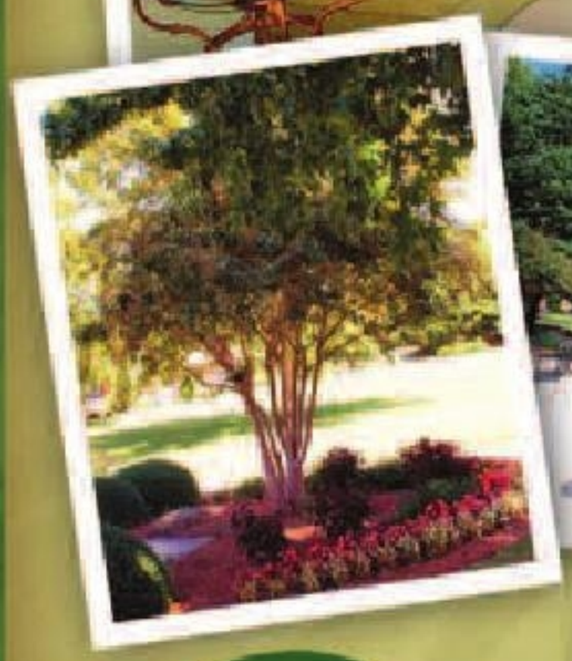

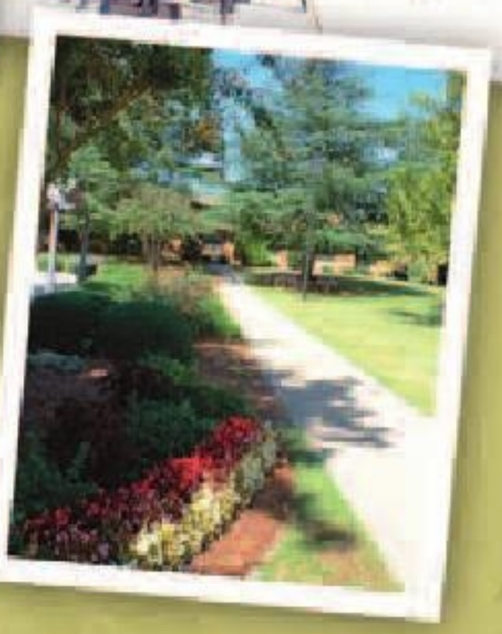

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Have You Seen Tom Collins?

Despite uncertain origins and overuse, this classic is a summertime keeper

By Frank Daniels III

We invited some new friends over for dinner the other day and my wife mentioned that we would start the evening with a Tom Collins. Yes, that absurd leftover from the Eisenhower years.

John, perhaps thinking of the Tom Collins' unfortunate recent history, maybe even thinking of heinous suburban activities that occurred with the consumption of such an unsavory cocktail, apparently told his wife that there was no way in hell he was having a Tom Collins.

He was late arriving to the backyard, and Laurie quickly said, "John, this is great!" in an exaggerated voice. John tasted his Tom Collins, and as he made his way down to the cherry, they told us about his reaction to the thought of a Tom Collins. "But this can't be a Tom Collins," he sputtered as he asked for another.

Like so many classic cocktails, the Tom Collins has suffered the fate of too much popularity and distorted production. Most of us have only had a shadow of the original, and like all shadows, it's nothing like the real thing. Collins mix should receive one of the new graphic warning labels to prevent self-abuse.

The Tom Collins is simple, fresh, unappreciated and fabulous. It is particularly good with the hard-to-find Hayman's Old Tom Gin and made according to the 19th century original recipe, but it is just as good with modern dry gins. You know what a difference fresh-squeezed juice makes in a cocktail, and the gin and fresh juice are what make this cocktail so refreshing. A small dash of sugar, a bit of club soda and garnishes finish it.

It is worth resurrecting this classic gin cocktail.

There are a couple of legends around the origination of the Tom Collins; depending on whether you like an American version or an English one — choose your own.

One version holds that an English bartender created the Tom Collins in the mid-19th century as a variation of the John Collins, a warm-weather drink made with Holland Gin, lemon juice and carbonated water. The Tom Collins substituted the very popular, slightly sweet Old Tom Gin that was the standard gin of the day for the heavily flavored and aromatic Holland-style gin.

American lore says that the cocktail is named in honor of The Great Tom Collins Hoax. This was a wonderfully silly urban flummox where someone would ask, "Have you seen Tom Collins?" To which the reply was, "No. Who?" And the response was, "He was just saying these things about you. He's right around the corner."

And on and on the game would go. Newspapers picked up the trend, and Tom Collins sightings from around the city were reported diligently. For reasons that might elude the modern city dweller, this was all the rage in New York during the summer of 1874.

As these fads do, it died out, and in 1876 an enterprising barkeep, Jerry Thomas, honored it with the Tom Collins.

Regardless, the Tom Collins is a summer cocktail that should not be relegated to history, but enjoyed for the refreshing drink that it is.

Enjoy.

Frank Daniels III is an editor and writer living in Nashville, Tennessee who frequently visits Wilmington. His cocktail book is Frank's Little Black Bar Book, *Wakestone Press. Contact him at fdanielsiii@mac.com*

Tom Collins

2 oz	Hayman's Old Tom Gin (or a dry gin like Plymouth)
1 oz	Fresh-squeezed lemon juice
1/2 tsp	Simple syrup (or sugar)
3 ozs	Club soda
Orange slice	
Maraschino cherry	

Stir the gin, lemon juice and sugar in a cocktail pitcher until frosty. Pour into an ice-filled Collins glass (12 oz. straight-sided glass) and top slowly with soda. Stir gently to mix and garnish with an orange slice and maraschino cherry.

Word People

To love and recommend a great book is like sharing a fine meal

By Dana Sachs

If you are a book lover, then you like to have a certain kind of friend — a book friend — whose judgment you trust absolutely. When that person says, "You have to read this book," you read it. Without my book friends, I would never have read Alan Bennett's *The Uncommon Reader*, or David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas*, or anything by Barbara Pym. Book friends trade titles the same way that investors trade stock tips. We're looking for the best books and we trust each other to help us find them.

At lunch at Flying Pi Kitchen, Suzanne Ruffin told me that she'd been reading a certain kind of thriller recently. These are thrillers from Sweden, but the titles don't start with The Girl and end with something like Dragon Tattoo. She's fond of an author named Henning Mankell. "I guess you could call it detective fiction," Suzanne said, "but it's more sophisticated than that, more thoughtful. The bad guys are not just bad guys. They're perverted."

Frankly, Suzanne Ruffin doesn't have a voice that you'd expect to hear describing perversion. Her accent is so Old South melodious that listening to her talk about deranged murderers is a little like seeing Scarlett O'Hara in a leather biker jacket: It shocks, but you love it too.

Flying Pi Kitchen is downtown near the courthouse and Thalian Hall. (The physical address is 402 Chestnut Street, but locals can think of it as sitting at the intersection of jury duty and Cinematique.) Back in 1986, filmmaker David Lynch used the building as the setting for Arlene's Diner in his cult classic *Blue Velvet*. There is nothing noir-ish about the restaurant these days. Fresh flowers grace the tables, original paintings hang on the walls, and a large blackboard menu offers home-baked goods, locally sourced produce and daily specials. Despite the friendly atmosphere, the *Blue Velvet* connection gives the place an edgy mystique. That, and talk of Swedish crime novels, suddenly reminded me of Raymond Chandler.

"Have you read *The Big Sleep*?" I asked. I don't want to give anything away, but the character of Carmen Sternwood in Chandler's 1939 novel could, I suspect, compete in creepiness with anything dreamed up by either Henning Mankell or David Lynch.

As it turned out, Suzanne hadn't read anything by Chandler. I'm not sure which is more satisfying, hearing a tip from a book-loving friend or urging someone to try a writer you adore. "That novel is deranged," I said. "It's perfect."

Suzanne understood exactly what I meant. "You need to be a little kooky," she told me, "to write such demented stuff."

A cup of clam chowder arrived at our table. Suzanne tasted it, then paused for a moment. "I don't like dill," she said. "I think there's dill in here, but there's not much of it, because this is wonderful."

You could call Suzanne a Flying Pi regular, so the restaurant's owner, Carolyn Atkinson, was standing nearby, waiting to hear our reaction. "Dill is more of a fragrance than a flavor," Carolyn told us. "You don't want to overdo it."

The discussion turned to soups in general and the fact that, with summer here, Carolyn isn't making her chilies or stews this season. She's serving more cold soups, like vichyssoise, and, she said, "things that are lighter."

"With good reason," said Suzanne. "Unless you were a farmer at the turn of the last century, you just can't eat like that anymore." As if to prove her point, she had ordered a beautiful fruit salad. "Don't you just love talking about food?"

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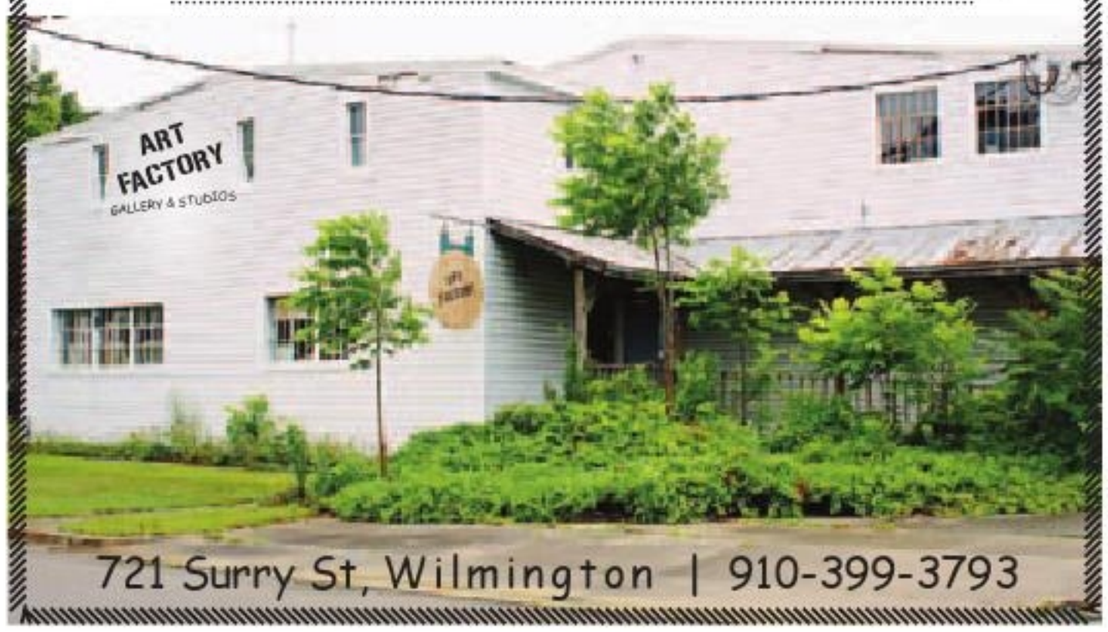

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she asked me as she popped an enormous blackberry into her mouth.

Let me say that we did not talk only about books and food. We also griped about what Suzanne, an editor, calls "pet peeves regarding English language usage." Together, we came up with a long list (if you don't care about the English language, please skip to the next paragraph): split infinitives, hyphens after –ly ("a happily married man," not "a happily-married man"), and the overuse of "awesome" ("reserve 'awesome' for things related to God," said Suzanne with a sigh. "A new dress is not awesome.") And, much as we both adore WHQR (which really is awesome), we could do without the weather reports that call for a "slight 20 percent chance of rain."

As Suzanne put it, "Could you be any more redundant?"

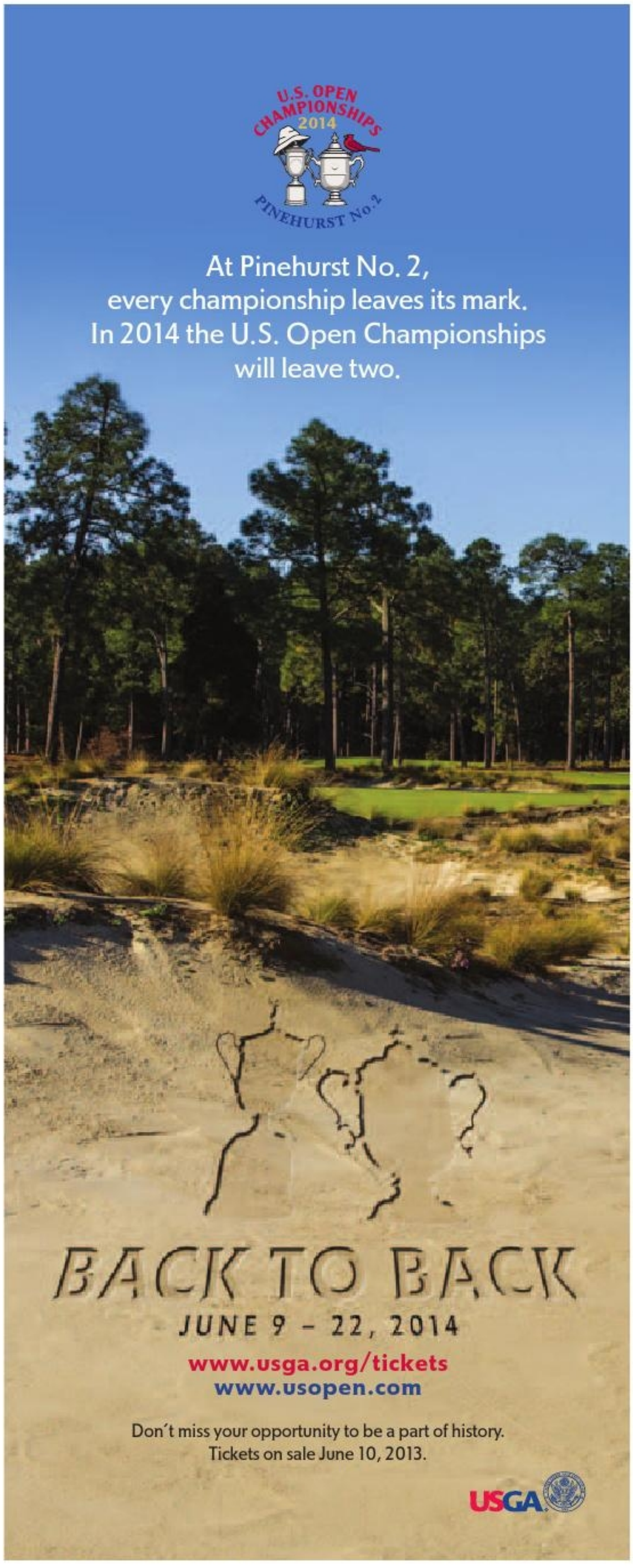
These are the kind of things that word people sometimes talk about. And, yes, we did have something more important to discuss. Like, have you ever heard of a baked potato grilled cheese sandwich? Thin slices of baked potato, sharp cheddar cheese, sour cream, chives and crispy bacon are set between slices of sourdough bread and finished on a panini press. And, have you heard of the cheeseburger savory pie? When it arrives at the table, it looks like a plain bun. Tear it open, though, and there's a burger inside. Savory pies are one of the Flying Pi's specialties, each day bringing different versions. "You think it's going to be terribly heavy, but it's not," Suzanne reported after she bit into it. "They've hollowed out the bread and inserted the meat, cheese, onion, a little bit of seasoning. Delicious."

It's probably not surprising that a restaurant called Flying Pi would serve regular pie, too. On the day we visited, the menu included key lime, sweet potato, coconut custard, ginger, and an addictive honey-sea salt pie, which is similar to a chess pie, sweetened with honey, and topped by a dash of you-guessed-it.

Between bites, we drifted back to our central subject. What did Suzanne think of the books of best-selling novelist Jodi Picoult? ("She's engaging, but you don't have to think very deeply.") And we agreed that Lewis Thomas wrote masterful essays and that *The Medusa and the Snail* deserved a prize for great title. Neither of us belongs to a book club, but Suzanne does have a go-to person for excellent recommendations: Norma Norwood, her hairdresser and friend. Norma's the one who suggested Abraham Verghese's magnificent novel about surgeons and Africa, *Cutting for Stone*.

Every week, Suzanne finishes three, sometimes four novels. I don't read nearly that much, but, still, my house is so burdened by skyscrapers of books that some rooms look like a miniature Manhattan. Suzanne doesn't have that problem. "I can't even remember the last book I bought," she told me. "I love the library." When we said goodbye after lunch, she was heading in that direction.

Dana Sachs' latest novel, The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, *is available at bookstores throughout Wilmington.*



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Why I Talk Like This

Blame green tobacco gum and swamp mud

By Bill Thompson

Anybody who has ever heard me talk knows I have a Southern accent. An advertiser who hired me to do some radio commercials said they hired me because I sounded "Southern enough to be distinctively Southern, but not so extreme that I couldn't be understood in New York."

At one time, I was embarrassed enough by my accent to make a half-hearted effort to get rid of it, particularly since I was in the broadcasting business then. But the accent became an asset when advertisers started looking for voices that weren't "regular" radio voices.

The talent agency I worked for once asked an advertiser why they wanted a Southern voice in a Northern market.

"People trust a Southern accent," he said.

I wondered about that opinion in view of the way that the media depicts us Southerners. All too often, Southerners are portrayed as rednecks, hillbillies, rubes, rustics, dimwits, and a slew of other negative stereotypes. Admittedly, we sometimes take advantage of the image. My grandfather told me once that if a man begins a conversation with, "I'm just an old country boy, but . . .", than you'd better hold on to your wallet.

A Chicago friend of mine said that if he had to determine who Southerners are based on in the media's representation, he'd just say "somewhere between *Deliverance* and *Gone with the Wind*."

Now that I'm out of the broadcasting business, I really don't think about my accent until somebody else brings it up. It is just a part of who I am. My voice is green tobacco gum and swamp mud. White rice and collards. Mosquitoes and sweet potato pie. My accent derived from a way of life that nurtured and shaped me into the fella I am today.

Like the New York agent, I trust a Southern accent, too. I don't mean the fake accents we hear on television and in the movies. I'm talking about the real sounds of the South that take me back home to the swamps and tobacco fields, to the cotton mills and country stores of my youth.

All the education and travel in the world can't erase those sounds from my mind or eliminate them from my speech. I could live thousands of miles from here and still carry those sounds of home with me.

I'm no longer embarrassed by my accent. I'm proud of it. It's a reflection of a place that is ever-changing, just like every other place in this country. We're more mobile now. We travel more frequently and are exposed to all kinds of accents and languages. We hope our young people grow up to be more educated, sophisticated, wealthier — and we hope they'll stay home. But they don't stay home. They leave, taking with them, just as I did, a part of all they have experienced.

When I write my stories, I hear those accents. I hear the conversation of farmhands toiling in the fields, the commentary of old men eating their noon meal from small lard-tins brought from home to the saw mill, the exchange of "helpful gossip" in the churchyard after the Sunday morning sermon, and the rowdy bragging of young men at the garage talking about stock-car racing.

I hear the sounds of their voices, their Southern accents ringing through my mind. They sound a lot like me.

Bill Thompson is a speaker and author who lives just down the road, in nearby Hallsboro.

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Piping Plover

Endangered and beautiful, our most sought-after coastal bird

By Susan Campbell

Along North Carolina's beaches,

one bird is more sought after than all the rest: the piping plover. Small and sandy-colored, they're easy to miss — and a genuine rarity along the East Coast.

With fewer than two hundred breeding North Carolina individuals (as reported in 2012), it is no surprise that the piping plover is an endangered species at both the state and federal levels. Most of our state's nesting pairs are found on the quieter beaches of the National Seashores — Cape Hatteras and Cape Lookout, for instance — where human disturbance is relatively low. Their affinity for open sandy areas devoid of terrestrial predators such as dogs, cats and vehicles means they are unlikely to be found breeding where people reside. Wintering plovers, however, can be seen along any sandy or wash areas along the coast. Migrants from the Northeast as well as the Midwestern populations also spend time here during the cooler months.

Piping plovers get their name from their distinctive, musical "peep lo" call. They, like all plovers, are small, long-legged birds with stout bills. They have white throats, chests and underbellies with muted gray-brown plumage on the upperhalf of their bodies. Their orange and black bill and yellow-orange legs make them distinguishable from the closely related Wilson's plover, which have a thick, dark bill and black legs, and are found in a similar habitat. The killdeer, a larger cousin of the piping plover, is more commonly found in open habitat away from the beach, especially during the warmer months.

As one can imagine, piping plovers blend in well with the sand that they continually traverse. In fact, when they stand still, they achieve near-invisibility — an essential survival strategy for a little bird with virtually no place to hide along an open beach. If flushed, it has a fast, erratic fight style which helps it evade aerial predators.

Piping plovers simply nest on the ground in a slightly scraped area. The speckled eggs blend in with the coarse sand and shell fragments along the upper beach or overwash area where they are laid. Given this strategy, it is not difficult to imagine how vulnerable the nests are to all sorts of predators, especially great black-backed gulls and ghost crabs — both notorious for stealing plover eggs. Cages and other enclosures have been developed to help protect the nests, but the losses are still high. Mother birds are known to use a broken wing display to distract would-be predators — even people — from their nests. But these birds mainly rely on camouflage for successful reproduction.

The young hatch after about two weeks and are capable of moving around and foraging almost immediately. The two to three speckled, downy, long-legged youngsters follow their mother away from the nest site to nearby feeding areas. Since they are not feathered, the mother must stop periodically to sit and allow the chicks to brood against her body for warmth.

As the young are moving around the beach, they are extremely vulnerable to being trapped in deep tire tracks left by off-road vehicles in soft sand. This, in addition to the associated noise and movement, are why limitations on ORV usage have been enacted in areas where plovers are breeding. Summer storms also affect the bird's nesting success, but pairs will re-nest if they lose eggs or chicks to overwash. Nevertheless, storm events also maintain and help create the beach habitat that the birds rely on. Man-made sandy areas such as dredge spoil islands tend to have greater silt content, which is not what the birds need for nesting. Preservation of natural beach areas is critical for the birds, especially for them to have adequate space during high tides. Unfortunately, the open expanses that attract piping plovers are exactly the kind of habitat people are drawn to as well. Conflict of interest occurs — whether here in North Carolina or in other coastal communities in the eastern United States.

An open beach habitat is not only important for plovers and sandpipers in general but also for a variety of other coastal birds such as black skimmers and common and least terns. Terns, also colonial nesters, need undisturbed sandy areas on which to make their nests. If you get the chance to visit Topsail Beach, Figure Eight Island or Masonboro Island this summer, keep an eye and an ear out. A flock of noisy terns on the beach may signal the possibility of spotting a piping plover — or two.

Susan would love to hear from you. Send wildlife sightings and photos to susan@ncaves.com or call (910) 949-3207.

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Horseshoe Lake

Out in Yonderville, the glory of Paradise must be sought

By Virginia Holman

Perhaps you too suffered through our long cold spring, and longed for time to speed ahead to warmer days. Then summer arrived, and along with it the acute awareness of its passing. Maybe, like me, your darling eldest child is swaggering off to college in the fall, and you feel that time is hurtling forward, with no regard to your tender heart, and the only thing you want is for time to slow down so that your family might linger in some small Eden. Luckily, there are a few places nearby that might be called Paradise. One of them is Horseshoe Lake.

My husband, son and I load our kayaks the night before our trip so we can leave before dawn. We hope to arrive early enough to catch the morning light. Horseshoe Lake is easily explored by canoe or kayak, and with 6.5 miles of birding trails, it's also a lovely area to stroll on foot.

The lake is about an hour and fifteen minutes outside of Wilmington, in the heart of Bladen County, which is also known in our house, affectionately, as Yonderville. (As in, "Where is this place? You mean it's all the way out in the middle of Yonderville?") You will know you're close to the lake once you've passed through East Arcadia, Lisbon, and downtown Elizabethtown. Drivers bold enough to exceed the 20 miles per hour speed limit through downtown are sure to become acquainted with the local police. A bit later, you'll find you begin to relax. You'll enter Bladen Lakes State Forest and realize you've been driving for a good while and haven't seen another car, another house, or much civilization beyond the asphalt road itself.

Soon you'll pass by Jones Lake State Park. Along the way, you may see an old snapping turtle the size of a dinner platter lumber out of the ditch to warm itself on the blacktop, its head thrust forward on its long neck, its spiked tail dragging behind like a mace. Should you decide to nudge him from the road, use a long stick, or an old kayak paddle, because he'll open his bubblegum pink maw and hiss at you like a cottonmouth. He's fast, too, with a sharp bite that can slice your fingers from your hand. Your shod foot won't fare well, either. Further down the blacktop, you'll see the old sign for Sweet Home Holiness Church, perhaps the world's prettiest name for a little country church, and you'll know you've nearly arrived at Horseshoe Lake.

The lake is at the end of a narrow dirt road. You'll regret washing your car the day before. Your windows will be filmed with road dust, the kayaks

PHOTOGRAPHS BY VIRGINIA HOLMAN

too. You'll see a small maintenance building, used by the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission, and then you'll arrive at a small field. This is the parking lot. You may spring out of the car like a kid and shout, "We're here!" If so, ignore the looks from your companions. Yes, the small dock at the boat launch appears to lead to a body of water not unlike the retention pond near your local shopping mall. Remind your companions that you have not dragged them out to Yonderville to paddle on a puddle. Horseshoe Lake is like a geode — its glory must be sought. If your nerves are frazzled from school or work, and you're looking for tranquillity, you've found it. Close your eyes — the first thing that will awe you is the quiet, then a chorus of spring peepers, and the warm breeze on your skin.

Horseshoe Lake is an ancient body of water, and one of the few relict Carolina Bay Lakes. No one knows how the many thousands of Carolina Bay Lakes were formed, but the most commonly accepted theory is that they are watery remnants of the inland ocean. Prevailing winds from the southwest are thought to have shaped the lakes into their distinct shallow ellipse with a common northwest-southeast orientation. Other theories as to their origin abound: Perhaps they were formed from meteor strikes, a comet explosion, or space aliens. However they formed, what has developed in the remaining undisturbed bays is beautiful. In the last hundred years, prior to their protection, many of these wetlands were drained and farmed. A quick tour of Google Earth reveals that the shape of the filled bays remains visible as a shadow or "ghost bay." Today, a number of these ancient bay lakes are now managed by the state of North Carolina: Jones Lake, Singletary Lake, Horseshoe Lake, and Lake Waccamaw.

Lake Waccamaw is the largest Carolina Bay in North Carolina, and perhaps its most famous. In 2008, a woman swimming in Lake Waccamaw stubbed her toe on what she thought was a submerged cypress stump. When she reached down, she found the ear bone of a 2.75 million-year-old fossilized Balaenula whale, a predecessor to the right whale. Archeologists were able to excavate the entire skull from a limestone outcropping at the bottom of the lake. It is the most intact Balaenula fossil ever found, and the first found in North America. It's now on display at Lake Waccamaw State Park. Think of that: All of this wilderness was once ocean. Who knows what fossils rest beneath Horseshoe Lake?

When you launch your kayaks, paddle about a quarter of a mile, then turn left. There, hidden from the view of the parking area, is a resplendent cypress swamp. It might take you a while to wend your way up the left arm of the lake and through the swamp, but that's part of the pleasure. The light is pinkly golden as it filters through the bright green fringe of the cypress leaves. There's ample space for kayaks and canoes to wander among the trees. Many are relatively young, only a couple of hundred years old, and most of the knees are small, and concealed beneath the water. The cypress trunks are webbed with sphagnum moss, and many host small shining fetterbush, whose thin red stems are laden with tiny pink bell-shaped blooms. You might mistake it as a member of the orchid family, but it's actually a relative of the blueberry.

In the forest we paddle on a magic carpet of lily pads. The leaves are slick, bright green with a red eye at the center. When I wave my hand over them, hundreds of blue and red damselflies rise, hover, and fly sideways to the next pad. In late spring and early summer, thousands of white lilies bob on the water among the cypress trees. Imagine paddling through Monet's garden at Giverny. In the cypress forest, vivid yellow prothonotary warblers flit overhead. They are named after the golden robes worn by medieval Catholic clergy. The color of this bird is so bright I'm reminded that once there were Carolina parakeets.

Once we finish wandering through the cypress swamp, we head along the right arm of the lake, along the outer rim. A small fish, a chain pickerel, flips itself onto my kayak, and I see several more prothonotary and hooded warblers. Ahead of me is a bog covered with yellow flowers the size of daffodils. These are carnivorous pitcher plants, and there are thousands of them. Long hollow stems filled with liquid lure insects into the pitfall trap. Years ago, I watched a botanist dissect one of the dried dead stems. Inside were the exoskeletons of hapless insects, stacked one atop the other, remnants of each meal. If you look between the stalks, you may see smaller carnivorous plants like sundew or white wicky. Remember that you cannot collect these plants; they are protected by law.

We round the tip of the horseshoe and head south. Here, a few short cypress trees stand sentinel well outside the forest. Shaped by the wind, they're as elegant as an ancient bonsai, with branches spread wide like an invitation to embrace. Several great blue heron poke along the bog; we spy an anhinga, and numerous wood duck. A wild turkey calls from the forest.

My husband and son, normally rushed, can't help but stop every hundred yards or so to marvel. There's a wood stork, not often seen. A tree frog clings to a damp leaf near the water's edge. Pitcher plants get a close inspection to see what lurks inside, and small carnivorous bladderwort, whose blossoms look for all the world like buttercups, are scooped from the water so that we can examine their delicate underwater traps.

When we complete our circuit of Horseshoe Lake, it's late afternoon, and time to load up for home. If you're like us, you'll likely want to return: to walk the trails, to paddle the lake in a different season, to photograph a wood stork or catch a glimpse of a red-cockaded woodpecker. It occurs to me that camping out here in Yonderville would be an excellent place for our family to view the Perseid meteor shower. Horseshoe Lake has some rustic overnight camping that's primarily used by hunters. The neighboring Carolina Bay at Jones Lake has more modern facilities. Then I'm wistful for a moment, suddenly aware of time's passing. I realize my son will be off to college by then. Today, however, was a wonder. Perhaps time didn't slow on our Horseshoe Lake excursion, but a day spent together wandering this special lake felt languid, timeless, and truly well-spent.

Virginia Holman teaches creative writing at UNC Wilmington, and kayaks the ocean, rivers and flatwater year-round.

To get to Horseshoe Lake from Wilmington, use Google Maps, and plug in Live Oak Methodist Church Road as your destination. The main entrance to the lake is about one mile down Live Oak Methodist Church Road on the right and has an orange gate. It is labeled with a wildlife sign that says "Suggs Pond" and a homemade sign that says "Campground Road." Stay on the main road as it winds around. You will pass the maintenance building on the left and then come to a house on the right. After that is a small parking lot and the launch site and entrance to the birding trails.

Check with the North Carolina Wildlife Commission about hunting seasons and designated areas. Hunting is not permitted on Sundays. Info: www.ncwildlife.org.

No combustion engine watercraft are permitted.

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Lee Crouch as a young boy preparing for a sailboat race. Wrightsville Beach, circa 1968.

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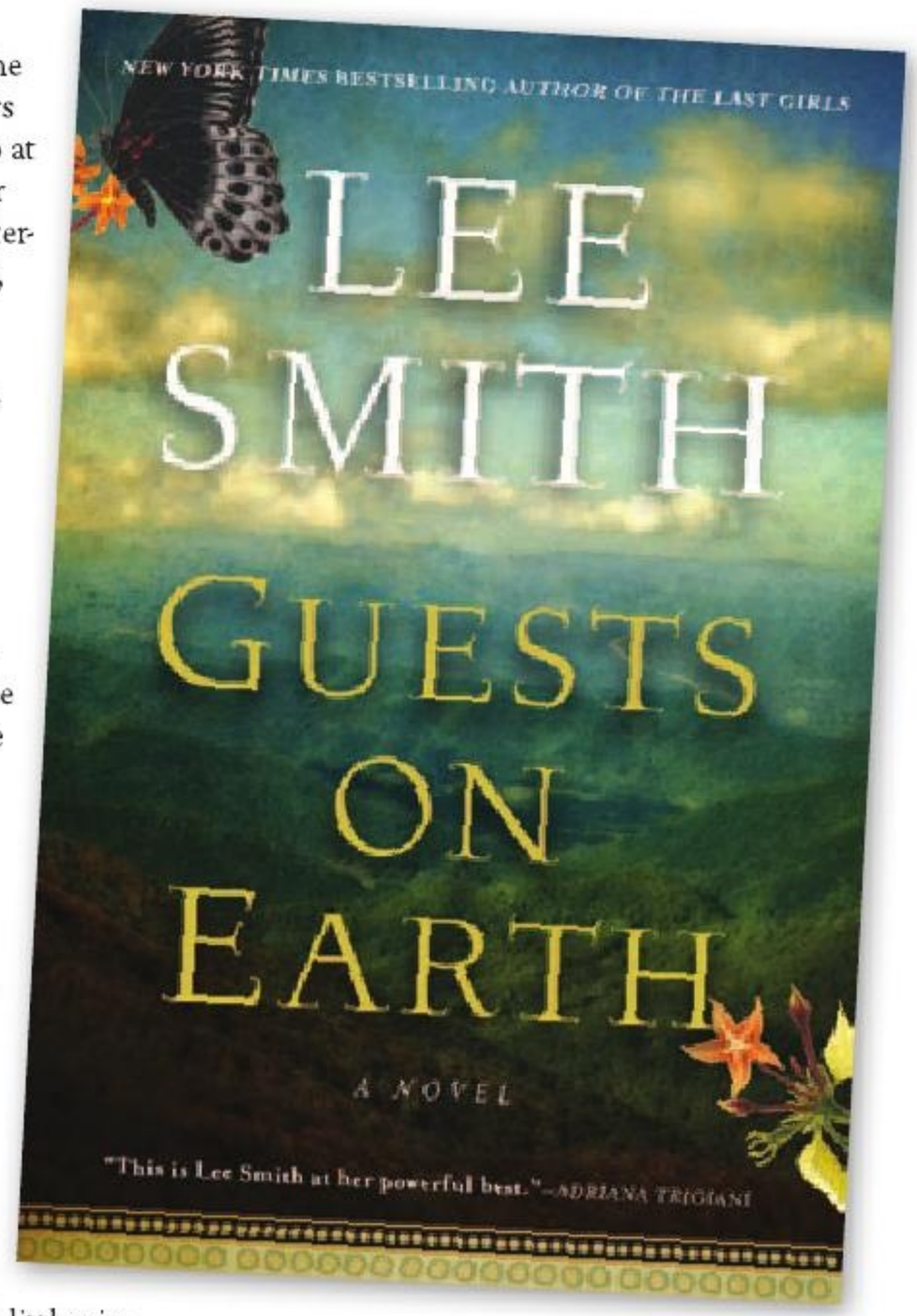
Most of What We Take Is Given

Believing the abandoned farm houses
and burned-out mobile homes held no meaning,
I spent my twenty-first year driving between
the Piedmont and the Carolina coast,
my foot to the floorboard between the tiny
crossroads whose names were Hayne, Stedman,
and Gumbranch, my eyes on the highway,
counting the yellow lines that ticked by like
seconds till I'd see the woman I believed was
waiting. These trips began in summer, heat devils
and tobacco blossoms shimmering, my mind
too manic to discern any singular detail,
but in the fall, a mile or so west of Beulaville
on a curve that dropped steeply down an escarpment,
I noticed a pony tethered to a fence post.
The pony was red, the color of the damp clay bank
against which it had, in all likelihood,
stood the previous summer, and I reasoned
that only the yellow poplar leaves drifting
the embankment served to silhouette the pony.
All that fall and early winter the pony
simplified my predicament: its suffering —
if indeed it was suffering — was not of its making,
and certainly it could will no circumstance.
It seemed unaware of the passing trucks
and cars, the weeks, the months, even the rain
that fell and turned its thick coat a dark brown.
And I began to believe that it all came down
to the casual drifting of leaves, a randomness
that must, finally, strip away all dignity.
Late winter brought ice storms, snow, mist
rising from the ditches and swamps, the Cape Fear
deep and muddy beneath the bridge I crossed
each Friday and Sunday. I recall an afternoon
in late February, the pony standing motionless,
wet snow clinging in heavy knots to its mane,
its eyes, as always, fixed on a patch of
gray earth. By then I knew it was ending.
I suspected, in fact, that the woman had taken
a new lover. I cannot now blame her, time and
distance being what they are, and it is best
to remember her standing in a doorway,
arms crossed below her breasts, her face
composed in silence, as if to ask a question.
It was April, and the highway west could
have been a green tunnel leading me anywhere.
I did not notice the red pony that afternoon,
and believe now that it had simply faded
into the sameness of the clay bank
against which it had stood waiting.

— Stephen E. Smith

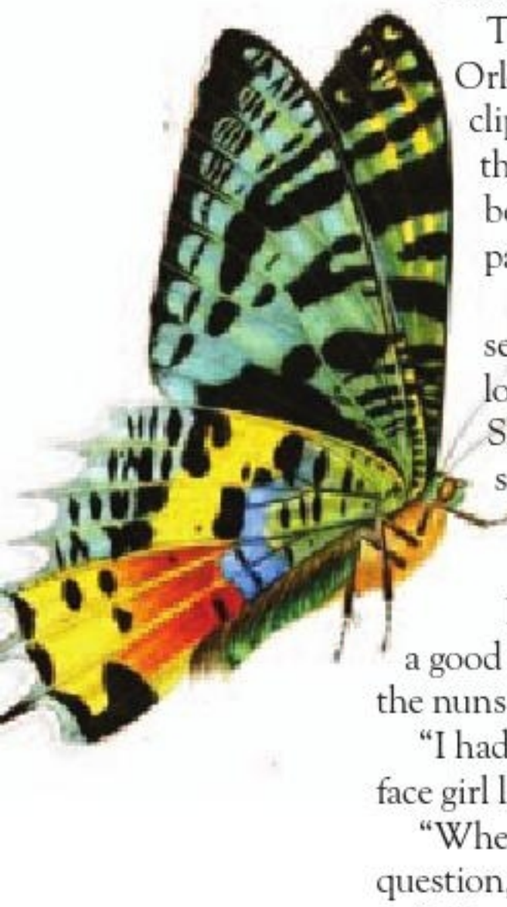
Paper Dolls

By Lee Smith



Finally I found myself face to face with the woman in the black ballet slippers and tights again, in the art studio at Homewood, several months after our first scary encounter. I sat at a long table, dabbling half-heartedly in watercolors, attempting a still-life of the fruit which the art teacher, Miss Malone, had piled up in a wooden bowl before us. Yellow pears, red apples, dusky grapes. Miss Malone padded from person to person with quiet words of encouragement, her thick gray braid hanging down to her hips. Meanwhile a summer breeze blew through the studio, with its heavy leaded windows propped open, its doors ajar. I wanted only to be out of there, to be in the swimming pool, newly filled and open, shimmering in the sunshine.

Miss Malone struck her hanging gong, the sign that the class was over. "Next time, we shall paint in *plein air,*" she announced.



These French words caught me unaware, bringing me back to New Orleans where suddenly I could see the dusty summer streets, hear the clip-clop of the horses and the buggies down by Jackson Square, taste the multi-colored ices the old man sold from a cart at the corner. I bowed my head to hide my tears as I washed out my brushes and packed my supplies away.

"There, there," a kind voice said, and I looked up in surprise to see the fearsome Mrs. Fitzgerald now changed entirely. She wore a loose-fitting artistic smock; her brown hair swung to her shoulders. She looked younger and prettier than she had before. "Now let me see." She smoothed out my "painting," which was terrible. "Not bad at all — though it must be boring for you, such a fuddy-duddy old assignment."

It was boring, though I hadn't thought of that. Determined to be a good girl, I did everything that I was told at Highland, as I had with the nuns, questioning nothing. I loved rules.

"I had a little girl, too, once upon a time," she told me gently, smiling. "A little pie-face girl like you. She was *awfully cute.*"

"Where is she now?" Too late I realized that perhaps I should not have asked this question, but Mrs. Fitzgerald's answer was calm.

"Oh, she's away, far far away, away from here, at a boarding school named Ethel Walker. She likes it there, she's better off." Her tone was wistful.

Better off than *what?* I wondered.

Others were leaving now. Miss Malone had come up to hover behind us, listening to our conversation, though she did not interrupt — according Mrs. Fitzgerald, as did the others, a kind of special respect. At that time, Mrs. Fitzgerald was spending almost all her time in the art studio, as much as Dr. C would permit.

"I know what little girls like." She was smiling at me. "Paper dolls!"

Inadvertently I clapped my hands, for I had never had any paper dolls, though I had always fancied them. "I would love that," I said sincerely, "but I'm afraid I am too old for them now."

"Well then, we shall make some very sophisticated *older* paper dolls for you," she said, "with very exciting lives. Look here." She hauled a leather portfolio up on the table

Lee Smith

Currently reading: I'm always reading a novel and a nonfiction book at the same time. Right now I am in the middle of Russell Banks' fine novel, *The Lost Memory of Skin*, and also Clyde Edgerton's wise and hilarious new book of advice on parenting, *Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers*. I just finished Barbara Kingsolver's *Flight Behavior* — which somehow manages to be timely, meaningful, and also a page-turner.

Perennial favorite book: Again and again I go back to several books: *To the Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf; *Absalom, Absalom* by William Faulkner; and the collected short stories of both Eudora Welty and Flannery O'Connor.

Favorite new author: Wiley Cash and Holly Goddard Jones

Literary guilty pleasure: Mysteries! Though I am not even guilty about this.

Where do you plan to get away this summer to read? Ashe County, North Carolina — and also Maine.

Quintessential summer read: In the summer, I tend to go back to the classics, which often require bigger stretches of uninterrupted reading time than I can manage during the regular year — this summer, it's going to be Thomas Hardy and the Brontes. I've already got moors on my mind.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CASSIE BUTLER TIMPY

and began pulling out big sheets of paper, all the colors of the rainbow. "Scissors?" she said to Miss Malone, who produced them without a word.

"Get the glue," she said to me, and I ran to do so, while the studio emptied out around us. She pulled up her chair; I pulled up mine, all thought of the swimming pool vanished.

Now the scissors began to flash in earnest as the silhouettes of girls — three, four, five, six, *ten* girls! — emerged, fluttering out onto the table.

"Well, make them some clothes, then!" Mrs. Fitzgerald shot at me, and I did, clumsily at first, tailoring their skirts and jackets as best I could, Miss Malone appearing with bits of lace and cloth and sequins to glue on. Soon the table was filled with these girls and their rudimentary clothing, as the dappled sunlight shifted outside and the sounds of a faraway game floated in the window.

"Now look," she said, folding the biggest sheet of paper just so, then snipping quickly, expertly, before pulling them out suddenly — a string of six girls, then twelve more after that, holding hands, dancing. I was blissfully happy. It was all the friends I had ever wanted.

"But where will they all live?" I blurted out, for this was the question I worried about all the time. Where would *I* live, once I got out of this hospital?

"Draw them some houses, then," Mrs. Fitzgerald said imperiously, pushing over another of the largest sheets, and I did so, an entire street of houses, something I was very good at, drawing houses with two stories, houses with three stories, houses with pointed windows in the eaves, some with balconies, some with chimneys, some little houses with picket fences surrounding them. I drew a grand stone mansion with a crenellated roofline like Homewood, the building we were in now, and then a real castle with a similar roofline and a high tower with a flag flying from it. I cut out a piece of blue cloth for the flag, and glued it onto the flagpole.

Then I took up one of our paper dolls and gave her a smiling face and blue eyes and a long blue dress and a yellow crown — this took quite a while, it was by far the most detail I had yet lavished upon any of my friends — I was working so hard, concentrating so intently, that I did not at first realize that Mrs. Fitzgerald had ceased her own fierce population of our town and sat quite still, observing me.

"Now she has been chosen princess by everyone in the country," I said, glueing the crown on her head, "and now she is going to claim her kingdom." I placed her up on top of the tower, next to the flag, and drew a happy smiling yellow sun in the sky above. "There now!" I said. "Ta-da!" imitating trumpets.

Mrs. Fitzgerald said not a word, reaching forward in a lightning stroke to grab up my beautiful princess and crumple her into a ball, which she tossed under the table. I sat paralyzed, like a paper doll myself, feeling my own blood and all my volition draining out of my body.

"You have killed her," I whispered.

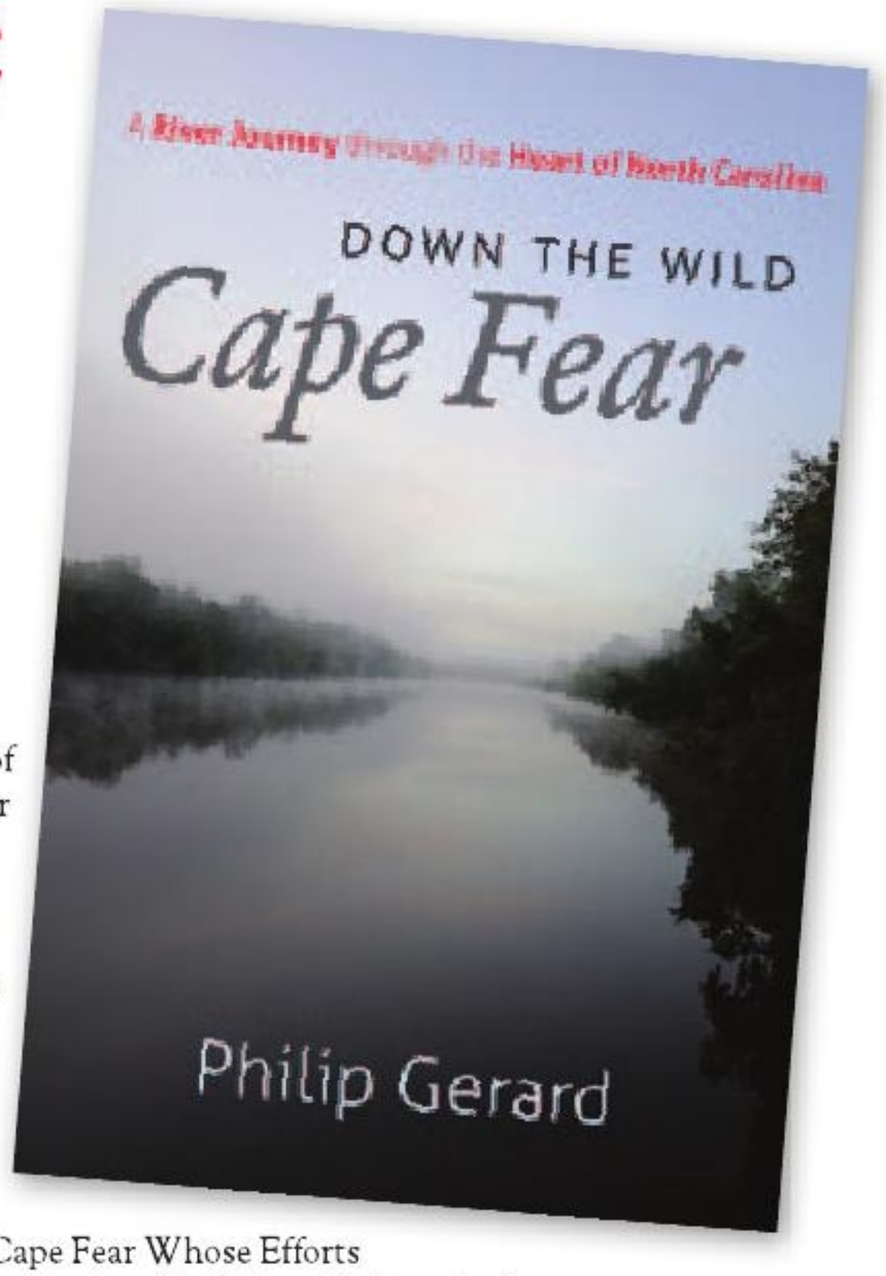
"Don't be such a silly little pie-face," she said abruptly. "It is far better to be dead than to be a princess in a tower, for you can never get out once they put you up there, you'll see. You'll see. You must live on the earth and mix with the hoi polloi." At this she began gathering up all our other paper dolls and crumpling them up, throwing them into the air where they were caught by the breeze and fluttered everywhere.

"Now, now, Mrs. Fitzgerald, let's save these, perhaps you and your young friend could create a fine collage," came the reassuring voice of Miss Malone, but I did not stay to see whether this suggestion had any effect or not. I grabbed up my chains of hand-holding friends and ran for dear life out the door, heart pounding, and did not look back.

Guests on Earth, *to be published in October of 2013 by Algonquin Book, is excerpted by permission of North Carolina author, Lee Smith, who has published twelve novels and four collections of short stories.*

The Pageant of the Lower Cape Fear

By Philip Gerard



James Sprunt was not content to simply be a wealthy businessman-philanthropist who had also been a war hero and now was a different kind of hero. Instead of resting on his considerable laurels, he set out to chronicle the history of Wilmington and the region, as much out of local pride as from the zeal of a historian, and he did a remarkably thorough and commendable job of it. He did not rely on stories and folktales — although he collected them voraciously — but tracked down primary sources and amassed an original library that would be the envy of any special collections librarian in the country.

Out of this work came a sheaf of important works, most notably *Chronicles of the Cape Fear River 1660-1916*, as fascinating and complete an account as we are ever likely to see of the complex historical beginnings of white settlement on the Cape Fear: all the abortive expeditions, failed colonies, shady land deals, Indian wars, royal interference, and national and civil feuding that culminated in the city and region as they existed by the time of the First World War.

He did, however, leave out the events of November 1898.

In 1915, the University of North Carolina conferred upon him the honorary degree Doctor of Laws, recognizing his writings and "his personal excellence and merit." Sprunt also endowed a fund at UNC to support the publication of historical monographs.

Then, as if all that weren't enough, he helped to engineer a spectacle that, in some ways, served as his crowning achievement and offers a clear portrait of the man whose grasp of both life and history was panoramic, grand, larger than life — and, unfortunately, conveniently missing the less flattering episodes of local history.

He arranged for the staging of an outdoor drama on the riverfront lawn of his mansion at Front and Ann streets. The full name of the pageant, as it was later published without irony, is instructive:

A Pageant of the Lower Cape Fear
Designed by the Literature Department of the North Carolina Sorosis to review the Heroic Traditions of the Lower Cape fear as an Incentive to the Achievement of a More Glorious Future.

This outdoor drama was based on his *Chronicles* and performed four times during June 7-9, 1921. The *Wilmington Morning Star* for June 7, 1921, reported, "On Wednesday evening a portion of the seats will be reserved for negroes, so that that they may see history reenacted."

Five writers, using the product of fifteen researchers, all coordinated by a professor of dramatic arts from UNC-Chapel Hill, Frederick H. Koch, under the auspices of the local chapter of North Carolina Sorosis, produced the monumental performance. Five hundred "citizen players" acted the roles. In addition to a small naval and Coast Guard flotilla of ships and airplanes that were moored in the river for the occasion, a replica of the blockade runner *Lilian* and a full-sized pirate ship (standing in for Blackbeard's *Queen Anne's Revenge*) were employed in the show, which was dedicated to "James Sprunt, A Loyal Son Of The Cape Fear Whose Efforts Have Preserved Our Glorious Traditions To Posterity."

This rather florid tribute is nonetheless accurate, for it is hard to find anyone who has ever done more to unlock the history of the lower river and present it to new generations — though the pageant, like his writings, betrays his fatal flaw as a historian: He selectively leaves out events that show his homeplace in a less than glowing light.

Still, his love of the river was genuine. Sprunt didn't just happen to live on the river — he was passionate about it. As a child he sailed on it, swam in it, rowed across it, and whiled away idle hours counting the ships anchored in the harbor below his window. As a young man, he ran the Yankee blockade through New Inlet under the guns of Fort Fisher. As a successful businessman, he was fond of entertaining on his sleek motor yacht *Luola*.

One of the proudest achievements of a life packed with remarkable achievements was to be elected a member of the Board of Navigation and Pilotage when he was in his early forties. This fulfilled an ambition he'd had since those boyhood sessions with Captain Levy, learning navigation, carried through his service on blockade runners. The man he escaped Fort Macon with was a Cape Fear River pilot, J.W. "Jim Billy" Craig. Now Spunt belonged to that elite fraternity of rivermen.

Indeed, he begins *Chronicles* with a valentine to the river of his boyhood: "From early youth I have loved the Cape Fear River, the ships and sailors which it bears upon its bosom. As a boy I delighted to wander along the wharves where the sailing ships were moored with their graceful spars and rigging in relief against the sky-line, with men aloft whose uncouth cries and unknown tongues inspired me with a longing for the sea, which I afterwards followed, and the faraway countries whence they had come."

Sprunt was a larger-than-life figure whose career spanned the heyday of Wilmington as a peacetime harbor, a wartime arsenal, and a commercial powerhouse. But his heart was always in another era, when he could watch "white sails glistening in morning light." Writing on the eve of America's en-

try into the Great War, he expressed his affection for those days before the Civil War launched him on his adventures: "Memory lingers with a certain endearment upon the daily activities of the harbor in that far-gone day, when the course of life was more attuned to the placid flow of the river than in this rushing, jarring time."

The pageant was a celebration of that golden past, a kind of public memorial expressing exactly the kind of nostalgia Sprunt himself felt. But it was also a reminder that a new era had arrived on the heels of victory in modern war and the lucrative ship-building enterprise it had brought to the city. The Navy Department sent a submarine chaser and two seaplanes, which were anchored on the Cape Fear just behind the pageant stage. The crews and a visiting admiral (Rear Admiral Edwin A. Anderson) were feted at a dance to be given in their honor at a reception at the American Legion hall following the performance Wednesday evening, "which should be finished by not later than 10:30 o'clock."

The pageant was front page news for two days running, and on the third showed up on page twelve as the pageant committee congratulated itself on having made such a financial and community success.

"Pageant An Inspiring Spectacle For Great Crowd Witnessing It" read the headline on June 8th, lauding the performance venue: "The pageant had for its setting the back gardens of Dr. James Sprunt's home on South Front Street — and a more appropriate place could not have been found in the Cape Fear country. A touch here and a touch there and the placing of seats, and the result was a real amphitheater. In the background the Cape Fear river, with its waters glistening from electric illumination, held in its lap craft of a long gone day and of 1921, all of which had a part in the exhibition. In mid-stream were anchored, brightly lighted by the coast guard cutter Seminole, the United States naval sub-chaser 201, and two modern seaplanes, silent reminders that now, as always in the past, America is as mighty with fighting power as she is fond of peace."

The stage was set beside the river, flanked by transplanted pine trees. An orchestra provided musical accompaniment — "America," "The Star-Spangled Banner," "Dixie," and assorted songs. During one segment featuring antebellum plantation life, called "Confederate Wilmington," the young bridegroom, Bob Harrison, takes the stage with his bride, accompanied by his faithful slave Scipio. "There was an old-fashioned reel dance, with music of the period by fiddlers; then songs by a negro quartet — real honest-to-goodness negro melodies."

It's hard not to cringe a little at the casual racism of both the script itself and the coverage of it in the local newspaper. And yet the pageant is fascinating, an honest-to-goodness event.

The nuptial festivities are interrupted by a call to arms — secession! All the other men at the wedding are called up to their respective companies. Though his commanding officer, Colonel Cantwell, wants to excuse him from duty, Bob declares, "I am going."

Colonel Cantwell protests, "But your bride . . . ."

His bride, Agnes Harrison, chimes in on cue, "I would not keep him from such a glorious adventure."

Bob is so worked up that he has forgotten all about their honeymoon: "That's the way to talk! We'll lick the damned Yankees before the watermelons get ripe, eh, Scipio?"

Scipio, forlorn, implores him, "Take me, Marse Bob."

Bob Harrison (slapping him on the back): "Of course I will. Do you suppose I am going to black my own boots?" It's hard not to wonder how such smug, belittling lines played for the Wednesday night "negroes" in the reserved seats, there to be edified by this spectacle of local history.

In the time-lapse drama required by a two-hour pageant covering some 300 years (about two and a half years per minute), Marse Bob is left for dead on the battlefield — presumably in 1865, when the war came to Wilmington in the form of the armada assaulting Fort Fisher and Sherman's army marching on Goldsboro. He is rescued — of course he is — by Southern women, "and great was the rejoicing, especially to the faithful Scipio." Overlooked is the inconvenient fact that Marse Bob has been fighting to keep faithful Scipio — and all his brethren singing the "real honest-to-goodness negro melodies" — a slave.

My favorite moment of unintended comic relief occurs when General Braxton Bragg, in command of the Department of North Carolina, is informed that Fort Fisher is under siege by the Yankee fleet. He is confident the fort can hold out, that it is invulnerable (after all, it was known as the Sevastopol of the Confederacy for good reason). But he is pressed: "What if it should fall?"

His answer: "Good-bye, Wilmington."

Bragg has a famous Army base named after him, the one we canoed past listening to the Sound of Freedom erupting on the live-firing range, but in Wilmington he is remembered as the bumbling general who abandoned the city to its fate when he could have rallied reinforcements to her defense and stopped the Yankees cold in an untenable position between river and sea. He was by all accounts a man whose career was a chronicle of failures and lost battles, but each one seemed to catapult him to a higher post. Had he not been a close friend of Jefferson Davis and brother of Thomas Bragg, who was Governor until the eve of war and later became the Attorney General of the Confederacy, maybe he wouldn't have been given quite so many chances to lose the war.

Episode Three, "The Fall of Fort Fisher," ends Part Three, "Confederate Wilmington." In the final lines, a courier delivers the devastating — alliterative — news: "Fort Fisher has fallen, sir."

Bragg replies, "Fisher fallen? Well then, Wilmington, goodbye!"

The pageant then unaccountably skips ahead to 1917, as if nothing has happened in the half century since the fall of the fort and the Great War: no emancipation, no Yankee occupation, no Reconstruction, no cotton exporting powerhouse, no racial coup in 1898, which means also no heroic, unarmed James Sprunt standing down a machine-gun-toting mob on behalf of his black workers.

Probably the lacuna — at least of the 1898 violence — was calculated. The cast committee included the one man who was implicated in the massacre up to his eyeballs: Colonel Waddell. He led the white supremacist mob that burned Alex Manly's Daily Record and started the mayhem, and he was then installed at gunpoint as the new mayor of the city.

The *Star* notes that many of the 500-odd actors portrayed their own ancestors. "King" Roger Moore was played by Mr. Roger Moore, and Maurice Moore by Mr. Maurice Moore, and so on. A Wednesday matinee was scheduled for all the schoolchildren of the city and county. The pageant was hailed, probably accurately, as the biggest event ever staged in North Carolina (excepting battles), and, unable to resist a bit of civic boosterism, the *Star* bragged that "the city has obtained more advertising than from any other single event and will continue to gain such advertisement."

It's easy to make light of the sentimental hyperbole, the rampant boosterism, the nativist racism, the smug Christian self-righteousness of such a production, yet part of me wishes we could bring it back. Revised, surely, to reflect a more truthful, unvarnished view of the hideous and dehumanizing institution of slavery and the brutal extermination of the Cape Fear Indians. And revised also to take some of the romance out of ruthless piracy and the heartbreakingly avoidable bloodbath of the Civil War. And maybe we ought to put back in that lost, turbulent fifty years and the white supremacist coup that remained an open secret for so many generations.

But there is something undeniably appealing to me about a concerted civic effort to capture that which unites us in spirit and history and bonds us to our patch of geography, celebrating the virtues of loyalty and endurance,

hard work and cooperation, a community vision that seeks to redress wrongs and cultivate civic duty and humane action — and the ambition to fulfill that vision with imperfect gifts in an imperfect world. Once in awhile we need to be un-ironic, sincere rather than merely clever, and maybe just a little bit corny.

All that deserves an epic play, performed in public. And by all means, let us stage a matinee for the schoolkids.

The saddest part of the whole pageant is the ending, in which the players watch a parade of great ships entering the port of Wilmington, a "glorious future" that only partly came true, for the city and its port never really recovered from the racial troubles at the turn of the twentieth century that brought trade and business to a breathless halt during three awful days of bloody violence.

And when the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, which had been leaving piecemeal for years, finally moved out, the city suffered a blow from which it would take decades to recover. Today, Wilmingtonians have to travel to Fayetteville to catch a passenger train anywhere.

The city that had once been at the nexus of national and even world trade settled into an uneasy role as a tourist destination. Ironically, after Sprunt, the most prominent owner of the Dudley mansion was Henry Walters, who was a driving force in establishing the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad to begin with, helping make Wilmington a transshipment point to the world.

In a strange closing of the circle, the great commercial shipping fortunes began and ended with that lovely, majestic house on the river.

Down the Wild Cape Fear: A River Journey Through the Heart of North Carolina *was published by UNC Press in 2013 and is excerpted by permission of the author, Philip Gerard. Professor and Department chair of Creative Writing at UNC Wilmington, Gerard is the author of nine books of fiction and nonfiction.*

Philip Gerard

Currently reading: *Rin Tin Tin* by Susan Orlean — lovely biography of a boy and his dog. I plan to write her a fan letter. Turns out we shared the same childhood.

Perennial favorite book: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. I have the complete set of Mark Twain's Library of America collection from 1901 and re-read a lot of it, but this one and *Life on the Mississippi* are the best.

Favorite new author: Jason Mott, author of *The Returned*. An intense and gifted young writer.

Literary guilty pleasure: The *Flashman* novels by George MacDonald Fraser. These ribald novels are hilarious and historically meticulous, the chronicles of a 19th century rogue who is everywhere history is happening: The Charge of the Light Brigade, Custer's Last Stand, the Indian Mutiny, the retreat from Kabul to Jalalabad. Wonderful diversions.

Where do you plan to get away this summer to read? Chautauqua Institution, New York. I'll be doing a workshop there but also hope to lounge about with some books I've been wanting to read, such as Ron Hansen's new book of stories and David Cecelski's *The Fire of Freedom: Abraham Galloway and the Slaves' Civil War.*

Quintessential summer read: Any great sailing adventure, from the *Master and Commander* series to Joshua Slocum's *Sailing Alone Around the World* to the books of Sir Francis Chichester.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CASSIE BUTLER TIMPY

Lost Vegas

By Fred Chappell

It was a sunny March day of breezes headstrong and rebellious when Mary Ellen requested that her parents buy her a horse. They replied that they would do so on two conditions: She must bring home all A's on her ninth-grade report card and she must name the horse Lost Vegas to remind her parents never again to bound rashly off the narrow path of prudence like beagles pursuing the elusive Bunny of Joy.

Mary Ellen promised to fulfill her part of the bargain, but she was uncertain her parents would keep theirs. She had not found them to be entirely reliable in business matters. The Ackermans were not yet poor, but they stood pretty close to the brink of that miserable ravine and it would be difficult for them to afford a horse, even one called Lost Vegas. Upkeep would be a tricky problem. The family had recently relocated into a housing development, familiarly called Diaper Hill, in Oakdale, a town of forty thousand dazed souls in the North Carolina Piedmont. Here there was hardly room on the common grounds for even a large dog, with so many children about, running, skipping, hopscotching, and fighting with knives.

So Mary Ellen resorted to legalism and drew up contracts and made sure that both parents signed the papers. "I, Eric Ackerman, do solemnly promise Mary Ellen Ackerman that when she reports all A's, I will buy her a horse to be named Lost Vegas." And a separate document: "I, Laura Williams Ackerman, do solemnly promise . . ." When these pages were completed to her satisfaction, Mary Ellen initialed them and slid them into a cardboard folder, announcing that she would keep them in her possession to make sure they did not get lost or destroyed.

"Oh, Mary Ellen," said her mother, "don't you think you can trust us?"

"It pays to be careful. You told me so."

"We've tried to do our best by you."

"Not always. Anyway, you don't think it matters because you don't believe I will make the grades."

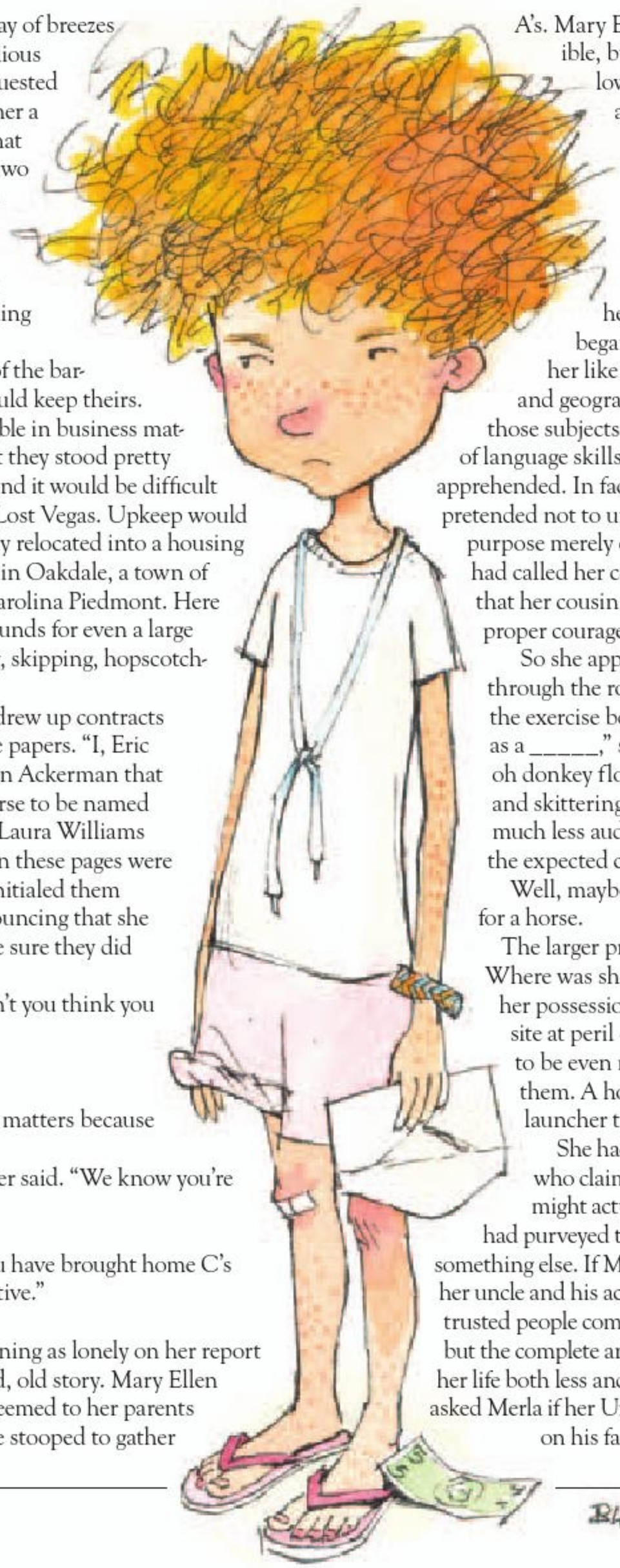
"We'll be very proud if you do," her father said. "We know you're capable and only need to apply yourself."

"But you don't really believe."

"Let's wait and see," he said. "Mostly you have brought home C's and B's. But maybe now you have an incentive."

"I do," she said.

Actually, the Bs were not numerous, shining as lonely on her report card as fireflies in a fog of C's. It was the old, old story. Mary Ellen was bright, school dull. It had sometimes seemed to her parents that she felt she would demean herself if she stooped to gather A's. Mary Ellen's motives were not always easily discernible, but it was clear that she did not hold herself in low esteem. "Someone has to take hold of things around here," she said, carefully not looking at her parents.



Yet it was only the subject called Language Skills that defeated her. It depressed her so heavily that her other work was affected and she began to feel indifference toward school creep over her like kudzu over a stately pine. She was good at math and geography and even history; her occasional B's lit upon those subjects lightly and lazily. What was the point, though, of language skills? She spoke English fluently; rarely was she misapprehended. In fact, she was so plainly spoken that some listeners pretended not to understand. Her Aunt Penny misquoted her on purpose merely out of prissiness when she said that Mary Ellen had called her cousin Tommy a hula-hoop. She actually had said that her cousin the bully was "full of poop." Aunt Penny lacked proper courage.

So she applied or demeaned herself and followed dutifully through the routines, sometimes gnashing her tusks. When the exercise book required her to fill out the phrase "as quiet as a _____," she forced herself to pencil in the rodent. Mouse, oh donkey flop, she thought. Mice make noises, squeaking and skittering. But she stopped herself from naming that much less audible creature — *as quiet as a louse* — and set down the expected cliché.

Well, maybe it was not so bad a bargain, to trade a mouse for a horse.

The larger problems offered more troublesome obstacles. Where was she to keep Lost Vegas once the animal came into her possession? Nowhere on Diaper Hill. Cats visited the site at peril of their many lives; the dogs that survived had to be even more savage than the teenagers that tormented them. A horse would have to be equipped with a grenade launcher to achieve personal security.

She had a friend, Merla, at Eastland Middle School, who claimed an uncle who lived on a farm. This farm might actually exist, Mary Ellen thought, because Merla had purveyed the information incidentally while talking about something else. If Mary Ellen had asked and Merla had described her uncle and his acres, they probably would not exist. Mary Ellen trusted people completely; she never expected them to tell anything but the complete and unadulterated falsehood. This attitude made her life both less and more complicated than otherwise. When she asked Merla if her Uncle Haskin would allow Lost Vegas to stable on his farm, Merla lied and said No. She did not say, as a

ILLUSTRATION BY HARRY BLAIR

truthful person would, "You don't own a horse and you never will."

Merla was not a truth-purveyor, so her uncle might allow the stabling. She differed from Mary Ellen in other respects as well. Mary Ellen was red-haired with curls as tight as the weave of a Brillo pad; freckles dotted her nose and the back of her neck; she had the habit of looking directly into the eyes, even when talking to the most scowlish of teachers. Merla was a slight, dark-complexioned girl with ferret-like facial features. Her movements were quick and nervous and she avoided the direct gaze. She mumbled her secrets — such as they were — to the ground beneath her ratty sneakers. When Mary Ellen remarked that one day she would own a horse and was concerned about where to keep it, Merla muttered to the gravel of the school playground that her Uncle Haskin lived on a farm.

"Big enough for a horse?" Mary Ellen asked.

Merla gave her a shy, surprised glance. "Real big. Big enough for an elephant." She studied the gravel again.

Mary Ellen did not ask if her Uncle Haskin owned an elephant because Merla would say Yes he does and she would reply that she didn't believe her and then Merla would fall grumpily silent. So she only asked where the farm was located and was gratified to learn that it was not far away. Merla's family visited sometimes on weekends and ate tomatoes from the garden. Mary Ellen credited the existence of the tomatoes because they were utterly irrelevant.

"When I get my horse, will your uncle let me keep it on his place?"

"No. It might get loose and eat the rhubarb."

"I promise not to let it get loose and I don't think it would like rhubarb," Mary Ellen said.

Merla considered the point, then nodded gravely and another bargain had been struck. So far, her plans were working out neatly.

In Language Skills she continued to apply herself, writing in her exercise book the words *cotton* and *thunder* instead of "as soft as maple syrup" and "as loud as a rent party." There were lots of rent parties on Diaper Hill. Sometimes they woke her up late at night with loud music and police sirens.

And then the fateful day arrived and Mary Ellen marched into the living room where her father sat on the sofa before the television set, studying the want ads in last Tuesday's *Oakdale Clarion*. He was unshaven and his plaid shirt was open over an unclean T-shirt. "Here," she said. She thrust her report card at his nose. "All A's."

"That's wonderful," he said. He opened the card slowly and read the letters off.

"All A's," he said. "Wonderful." Then he called out, "Laura, honey, come and see."

Her mother entered and agreed with her husband. "Wonderful. We're proud of you." She was wearing a pink apron that was supposed to read Kiss The Cook across the chest. But a dark, mysterious stain blotted out the C. Kiss the ook.

"Now I get to have Lost Vegas," Mary Ellen said.

Her parents looked at each other with soulful, sorrowful expressions. Her father shook his head. Her mother said, "Honey, this is not a good time for a horse. Where would you put it?"

"On Merla's uncle's farm. It's not far."

"Have you talked to this farmer?"

"Merla said he would let me keep him there, so he will."

"Mary Ellen," her father said, "we always knew you were really smart and just needed to apply yourself. You've made us very proud."

"Lost Vegas," Mary Ellen replied.

"Things are real tight just now. We don't have much money."

"I know all about that," she said. "I was there."

She had been with her parents in Las Vegas. She had stretched out on a big olive-green towel by the hotel pool, reading *A Wizard of Earthsea* and watching showgirls tone their tans while her father played poker in the casino with men in cowboy hats who knew how to play the game and her mother fed slot machines until she collapsed and had to be returned to their room in a wheelchair.

"Yes," said her father, "that was a dumb thing for us to do. Really dumb. But it is in the past and we have to move forward. We're trying to get back on our feet."

"You will have to try harder. We made a deal."

"How can we try harder?"

"For one thing, you could look for a job in today's newspaper. It would be more up-to-date." To her mother she said, "And you could start by washing your apron."

"It sounds like somebody is getting a little too big for their britches," her father said.

"Somebody has to," Mary Ellen said. "Somebody has to take hold."

"All right," he said, "I will go to Barnes & Noble and pick up a newspaper. The walk will do me good. The air is getting kind of bossy in here."

"I kept my part of the bargain."

"Yes, you did. Yes. I'll be back in a little while." He went to the closet and got his tan windbreaker and slipped it on.

Her mother was silent. Her eyes had filled with tears and she could not speak. She walked toward the bathroom, untying her apron as she went.

Three hours passed before her father returned, perhaps not one hundred per cent sober, to announce: "I have a job. It's not much and it certainly doesn't pay very well, but at least it's a job. I will be clerking at the bookstore."

"Oh honey!" said his wife. "What happened?"

"They had sold all their local papers," he said, "so I asked if they had any left from yesterday since I only wanted to look at the want ads. So the man I was talking to, Bert Sellers, asked if I was looking for a position and I said Yes. One of the employees had walked off the job hardly twenty minutes before. He was a poet, Bert told me, and unpacking innumerable cartons of James Patterson novels had brought on clinical depression. He said he was running away to join the circus."

"That's a good idea," Mary Ellen said. "The circus has lots of horses."

"As I say, it doesn't pay well, but it's a start and there's a possibility I could move up to a management position." He named a salary figure that seemed an immense fortune to Mary Ellen, but she could see that her mother's expression was less than joyful.

"I'll make a light supper," Laura said. "We have some meatloaf left over and some fish sticks."

"That sounds tasty," he said, "but first I want to take a shower and freshen up. This is a new start."

"Tomorrow morning would be better," she said. "I am soaking my apron in the bathtub."

"That is a good idea," Mary Ellen said.

"That means I'll have to get up pretty early," he said. Then he smiled. "But I can handle that."

Her mother whispered when she set out breakfast for Mary Ellen. "Your father is still asleep," she said, "but he'll be up soon. He has to work long hours now and we won't have dinner till about seven. I'll fix a snack for you for after school." She saw Mary Ellen gazing upon her apron. Kiss the ook. "This stain just won't come out," she said. "I don't know what it is."

"Pour a powerful acid on it," Mary Ellen said.

"A bleach, you mean? I'm afraid I'll spoil it. Your Aunt Penny gave me this apron. She might have meant it as a joke. Sometimes I don't understand

my own sister."

"I bet she got it at a yard sale."

"Yes, I expect so. Isn't she clever, your Aunt Penny? Go on and eat your eggs. You don't want to be late for school, now that you're doing so well."

"I'm never late," Mary Ellen said, "but I hate school. As quiet as a mouse. It ought to be as quiet as a guitar locked in a bank vault with the strings off."

"I don't understand."

"That's okay. I'll get my book bag."

"Yes," her mother said. "Don't forget your book bag."

The following Saturday her father received the first paycheck. On Monday her mother carried it to the bank and changed it to cash. After dinner that evening, they asked Mary Ellen to follow them into the living room. On the coffee table lay a large brown envelope with two words printed emphatically in black magic marker: LOST VEGAS.

"Now watch this," her father said. From a business envelope filled with money he withdrew a five-dollar bill and slipped it into the Vegas envelope where it failed to add significant bulk. "We'll do this every week without exception," he said, "and one of these days there will be enough money in this packet to buy the horse."

"Five dollars? It will take a thousand years."

"It adds up. Little by little."

"Ten thousand years."

"It may be that you will change your mind and decide to do something else with the money," her mother said.

"What else?"

"Maybe you'll decide you want to go to college."

"More school? As cool as a cucumber? It should be, As cool as an ice cream parlor."

"What are you talking about?" her father said.

"I've made up my mind what to do," she said.

"And what is that?" he asked.

She did not answer because if she unveiled her plan it would not work. She was going to take hold of things, making sure that her father got to work on time and got a raise for good salesmanship and that her mother learned to cook vegetables and wash clothes and that Cousin Tommy and Aunt Penny never visited again. It would take a lot of doing and she might have to resort to violence to make it all happen. If they didn't like that, too bad. They could just kiss her ook, every last one of them.

Fred Chappell's new fiction, "Lost Vegas", published by permission of the author. UNCG Emeritus Professor of English Fred Chappell served as the state's Poet Laureate for six years.

Fred Chappell

Currently reading: *What Gardens Mean*, about the philosophy and history of gardens by Stephanie Ross.

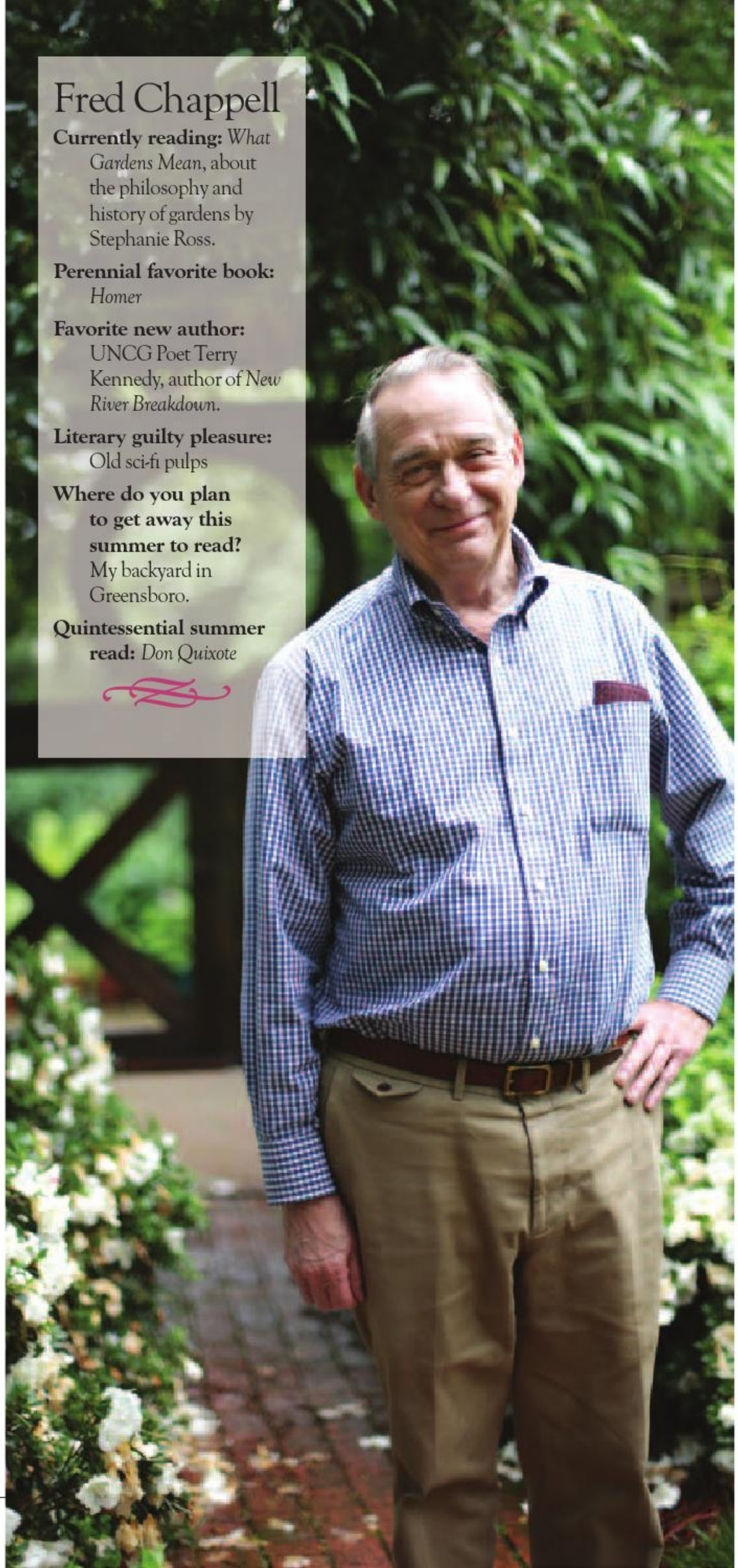
Perennial favorite book: *Homer*

Favorite new author: UNCG Poet Terry Kennedy, author of *New River Breakdown*.

Literary guilty pleasure: Old sci-fi pulps

Where do you plan to get away this summer to read? My backyard in Greensboro.

Quintessential summer read: *Don Quixote*



PHOTOGRAPH BY CASSIE BUTLER TIMPY

Salesgirl

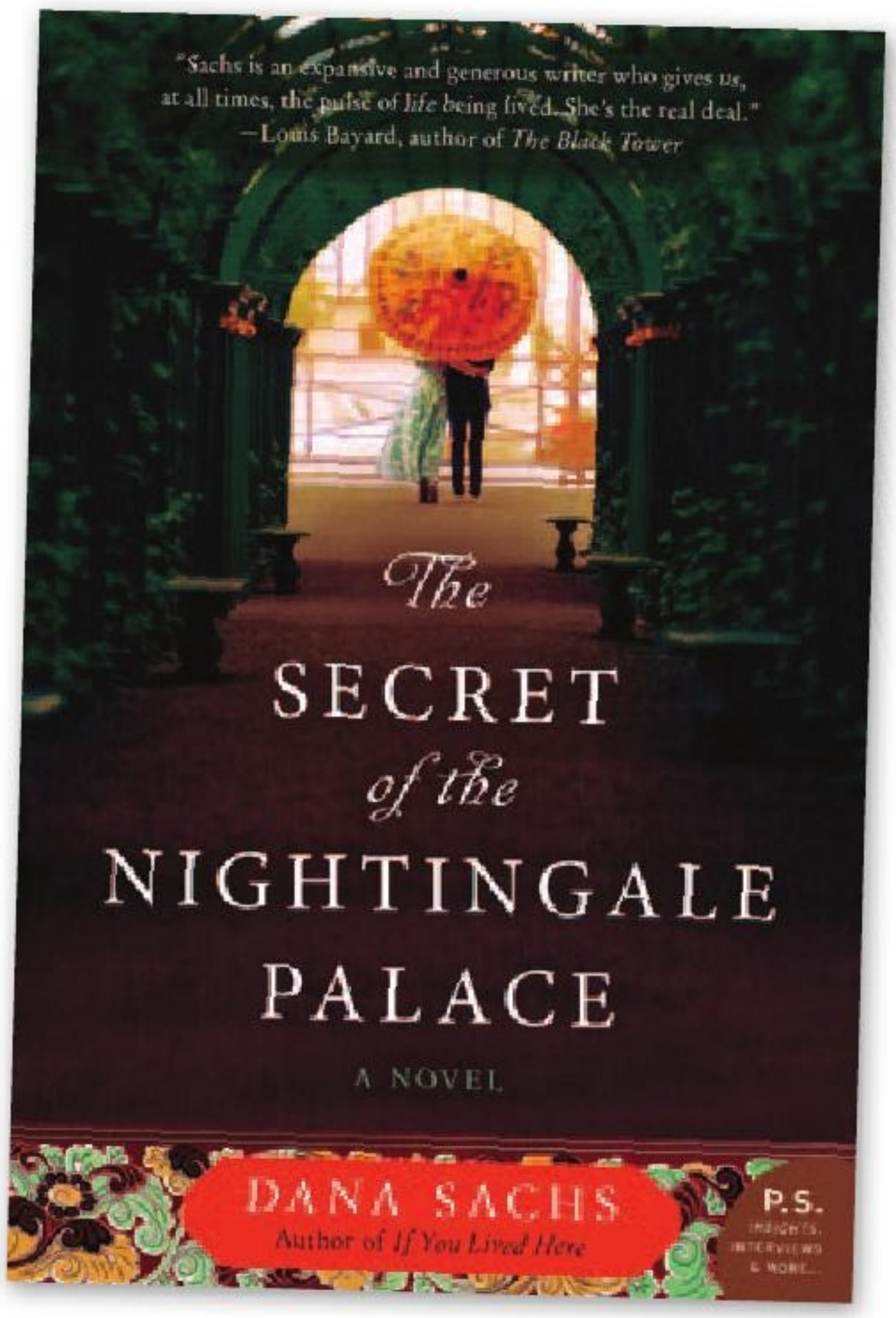
By Dana Sachs

In the spring of 1940, Goldie Rubin traveled alone by train from Memphis to San Francisco. She was twenty years old, on her first journey, and because she could not afford to buy a berth, she spent the entire five-day trip on the observation deck, having stashed her suitcase in one of the sleeping cars. At first she subsisted on the cheese and bread she'd brought from home. When that ran out, she bought one sandwich a day, and only at station snack bars, where the prices were cheaper than on the train. She cut the sandwiches into quarters: one for breakfast, one for lunch, one for dinner, and one for emergencies.

Sometimes, too, she would amble through the club car in between seatings and scavenge bread. Despite her poverty, she dressed smartly. Her mother had taught her to buy one very good thing and supplement the rest of her wardrobe with less expensive accessories. She had a very good wool coat, for example. When she wore it, people didn't seem to notice that her dress had faded, that the leather on her shoes was cracked and thin, or that her hats were merely scraps of beautiful fabric that she tacked and darted into interesting shapes and pinned to the top of her head. During that brief ten minutes between the early and late service, she hoped that the waiters might mistake her for an actual patron, or perhaps, she thought, they were too busy to notice a young woman snatching leftover dinner rolls off the tables. In fact, nothing slipped by the railroad staff. They'd seen all the tricks and scams, from freeloaders hiding in the toilets to the furtive trysts that took place late at night behind the flimsy curtains of the cheaper berths. They noticed Goldie, of course, but she was young and pretty and they sympathized with her situation. When the dining car waiters saw her approach, they turned their backs a little, just to give her a chance.

By the time Goldie made it to California, where her married sister, Rochelle, met her at the station, she had grown weak and ill. Rochelle's first thought, upon seeing the pale-faced Goldie totter from the train, was to regret that she'd invited her to come live with her in San Francisco. Rochelle had two young children and a traveling-salesman husband who left on Monday morning and didn't return until Friday night. She had invited Goldie to live with her family in the expectation that Goldie would help around the house and provide her with some companionship. She didn't want another responsibility on top of the ones she already had. Fortunately for both of them, a big meal of brisket and potatoes revived Goldie quickly. She might have seemed on the edge of starvation, but she was also young and healthy, so she recovered amazingly well. Within a week she had found a job at Feld's Department Store. Dozens of young women had applied for the position, but Goldie impressed the manager, Mr. Blankenship, with her sense of style and her previous experience as a clerk in the hat department at Lowenstein's in Memphis. She was hired at the decent salary of twelve dollars a week, and she quickly earned a raise.

Goldie wasn't a beauty in the way that film stars of the day were beautiful, with their fair complexions, angelic smiles, and easy grace. Goldie had olive skin, thick brown hair, and dark circles around her deep-set eyes that gave her the haunted look of a waif in a silent movie. Her body, though, was elegant and curvy, her eyes bright, her expression quick, her mouth full of sultry charm. The thing about Goldie that most impressed her customers at Feld's, however, was the fact that she had an almost magical


"Sachs is an expansive and generous writer who gives us, at all times, the pulse of life being lived. She's the real deal."
—Louis Bayard, author of The Black Tower
The
SECRET
of the
NIGHTINGALE
PALACE
A NOVEL
DANA SACHS
Author of If You Lived Here
P.S.

way with clothes. No matter what she put on, it looked like something out of *Harper's Bazaar*. The simplest shirt or the slimmest, plainest skirt had the look of Paris couture as soon as she slid them onto her body. The wealthy San Francisco matrons who shopped in the store recognized that quality in Goldie and wanted it for themselves. During her first week, posted in millinery, she sold seventeen hats.

It took Goldie longer than that, though, to make friends. She was younger than her colleagues, with less experience, too, and they resented that she sold merchandise so easily, and that she so greatly impressed Mr. Blankenship. So Goldie ate her lunch alone. It wasn't until Mayumi Nakamura began to work at Feld's, in April, that Goldie made a friend. Unlike Goldie, Mayumi wasn't hired as a salesgirl. She had taken design classes at the Academy of Art College, and Mr. Blankenship hired her to create the store window displays. When they pulled the paper down from Mayumi's first window, Goldie thought it was the most beautiful thing she had ever seen. Mayumi had created an ocean scene in the tiny six-by-eight-foot space. The walls and floor were aquamarine, speckled with different shades of green. Growing up from the corner, a giant coral sculpture, carved from foam and sponge, stretched like an undersea tree toward the surface. Cut-out fish of all shapes and colors — feathery purple, shiny silver, and striped in orange and yellow — hung from the ceiling. In the midst of all this, a mannequin had been reborn as a mermaid, twisting in the current, her shimmering tail making a joyous flip through the water. Only one piece of Feld's merchandise was on display in this entire scene. It was the flower-link sapphire necklace that glimmered on the mermaid's neck.

Until then, store displays had followed a model of crowding every window with as much merchandise as possible. The more you put in the window, the better chance you had of attracting customers with at least one product they might like enough to come inside and buy. Mayumi's windows were never meant to sell particular objects (though the necklace was extraordinary, it was meant to accessorize the mermaid more than anything else). Rather, Mayumi's window sold an idea of beauty and happiness that would draw people inside to choose merchandise that might satisfy their own desire for beauty and happiness.

For Goldie, Mayumi's window served as a revelation that beauty was not a quality within a particular object, but a more generalized attribute to strive for throughout life. She began to wonder about the existence of ideas greater and grander than she could yet understand, and she began to consider new possibilities for her own future. Looking at the mermaid, for example, did not kindle a desire for under-water exploration, but it did make dreams that once seemed impossible — like traveling to Paris or Rome — just a little less remote. Goldie began, then, to keep an eye on Mayumi and plotted ways to talk with her.

Mayumi, though, was difficult to know. She didn't work regular hours but would instead show up when she felt like it, perform her magic on the windows, and leave. During the time she spent in the store, she worked with serious concentration, but her movements were languid and she never seemed anxious or even concerned. Often Mayumi would simply stop whatever she was doing and sit there, on the floor or wherever she happened to be, staring into space. Did all artists work in such a dreamy way? Goldie had never met an artist before, so she couldn't know.

Goldie also noticed that Mayumi didn't act like other people. In Goldie's experience, normal conversations followed certain cues. You might say, "How are you?" and the other person would respond, "Fine, thank you. And you?" Mayumi didn't care about those cues. If someone asked, "How are you?" Mayumi might reply, "I'm thinking of Florence all the time. I need to see the Uffizi Gallery." Or she'd say, "I think I can find a shade of red that is also black. Or black that is also red," and then she would laugh at herself because she knew she sounded silly. Goldie liked that laughter, too.

And finally, Mayumi was attractive in a way that struck Goldie as completely new. In Goldie's experience, women attracted men by using certain predictable, and fairly conventional, methods. One girl might be pretty and sweet. Another had curves in all the right places. Another might be flashy and somewhat dangerous. Prettiness, to Goldie, always amounted to the ability to buy the right clothes to fit that year's fashion. If you had money, you bought silk. If you didn't have money, you bought cotton or wool and kept it clean and neat. The rules were fairly simple.

In Mayumi, Goldie identified a new kind of attractiveness. Later, when it became more of a religion for her, Goldie would call it "refinement." But in 1940, she had not yet heard the word. Other women layered fabrics in showy, predictable ways — blouse tucked into skirt, matching jacket, coordinated heels and stockings, a hat and a pair of gloves. Mayumi rejected these conventions. She might pair, for example, simple black wool trousers with a lacy ivory shirt. Often she didn't even wear a hat but would instead pull her long hair into a bun and don large hoop earrings as a sort of balance.

People less attuned to fashion would have seen Mayumi, said, "She looks good," and left it at that. Goldie observed more carefully, however, and was able to see the particular sophistication with which Mayumi dressed. While others might have observed Mayumi in a green crepe dress and thought, "That's beautiful," Goldie could see that the dress was beautiful for one specific reason — a twist in the pleat of the skirt that captured and accentuated the narrow line of Mayumi's waist. As Goldie increasingly admired Mayumi for her ability to create her own style, she also began to think that she could learn from her.

Mayumi took more time to notice Goldie. What Goldie saw as a dreamy aloofness actually stemmed from nearly constant inspiration and glee. Mayumi had spent months convincing her parents to let her get a job. Once they finally did, and she found her position at Feld's, she went into a frenzy of creative activity. She had always loved making things. Now, the windows offered an outlet for every idea in her head. If Goldie was a girl adrift, Mayumi was a girl set free.

It took several weeks, then, for Mayumi to begin to notice anything beyond the paint cans and fabric and tissue paper surrounding her. And then, like someone emerging from a fog, everything around her clarified, and there was Goldie, standing in the doorway, watching her.

At first the two talked while Mayumi worked, Goldie spending her lunch break on a stool just outside the platform of the window, while Mayumi, in her apron and canvas slippers, applied wallpaper or worked on some trompe l'oeil effect on a back wall. "Who is your favorite designer?" Goldie asked. She had become partial to Elsa Schiaparelli, but worried sometimes that her designs were too fussy.

"Mainbocher," said Mayumi. She looked over to see Goldie's reaction, which, as expected, was one of surprise and dismay.

"But he doesn't even show his fashions," Goldie said. The designer, who had a studio in Paris, only allowed a small coterie of people to view, and buy, his clothes.

"It doesn't matter," said Mayumi. "I can look at photographs of his clients and learn from him."

"But what do you learn?"

"All that matters is elegance," Mayumi said. She was creating a scene of lovers at sunset, and she wasn't happy with the color pink she'd chosen for the walls. She dipped her paintbrush into the bucket of white paint and started to apply a thin topcoat to mute the intensity of spring rose.

"Not beauty?"

"Not beauty. You can have beauty without elegance, but you can't have elegance without beauty."

Goldie thought about this one. Mayumi was right. Goldie had seen a lot of beautiful trashy-looking girls. And she thought of the elegant women who occasionally came into the shop. Fate might not have given these women any natural good looks. To be honest, some of them were downright homely. But if they were elegant, they became beautiful. Wallis Simpson, for example, was nothing to look at but had become one of the most admired and attractive women in the world. Goldie knew that she herself was pretty enough, but she decided then that she wanted to be elegant even more.

The Secret of the Nightingale Palace, published by HarperCollins Publishers in 2013, is excerpted by permission of HarperCollins. Wilmington author Dana Sachs has also penned The House on Dream Street: Memoir of an American Woman in Vietnam; If You Lived Here: A Novel; *and* The Life We Were Given: Operation Babylift, International Adoption, and the Children of War in Vietnam.

Dana Sachs

Currently reading: *Bobcat and Other Stories* by Rebecca Lee. Funny, beautiful and brilliant.

Perennial favorite book: I hate to say it because it's so predictable, but, really, anything by Jane Austen.

Favorite new author: Holly Goddard Jones, a Greensboro writer whose new novel, *The Next Time You See Me*, is mysterious, creepy, and totally compelling.

Literary guilty pleasure: I just read my first P.G. Wodehouse — *The Adventures of Sally* — and it was like eating a chocolate truffle in the form of words. So delicious.

Where do you plan to get away this summer to read? Budapest! I'm doing research for a new novel and that's drawing me to books about World War II and classical music.

Quintessential summer read: Anything by Nancy Mitford is pure pleasure.

PHOTOGRAPH BY CASSIE BUTLER TIMPY

Michael Parker

Currently reading: *The Measures Between Us*, a novel by UNCG MFA grad Ethan Hauser.

Perennial favorite book: *Madame Bovary* by Gustave Flaubert

Favorite new author: Rebecca Lee, author of *Bobcat and Other Stories*.

Literary guilty pleasure: I have plenty of reasons to feel guilty, but what I read is not one of them.

Where do you plan to get away this summer to read? I live in Austin in the summers so in the afternoons, when it is in the triple digits here, I go read in the shade on the hill above Barton Springs Pool, an Austin institution, a spring-fed 68 degrees year-round, a perfect place to combine my favorite things: reading and swimming.

Quintessential summer read: *Independent People*, by Halldor Laxness. It's about sheep farmers in Iceland and was published in the '30s. I like to read Russian lit in the summer as well, because I hate cold weather in real life, but I have no problem with it on the page, especially in the summer swelter.

Widow's Walk

By Michael Parker

The babysitter had never seen an attic or a basement, since she had lived all her seventeen years in a trailer so close to the sound that even houses were built up off the ground. One afternoon she put the baby to bed in her crib on the old sun porch, pulling all the blinds and curtains to fool day into night. She waited for the child to fall asleep while sitting just outside the nursery on a long wooden bench running down a corridor almost as wide as the trailer where she lived with her mother and two younger brothers.

"When the house was built in the 1840s they kept the hallways wide to allow a good breeze between the front porch and back," the baby's father had told her on the first day of the job. He took her through each room and talked of things like crown molding and wainscoting and he called their walk through the house a tour, which reminded her of when she was still in school and they climbed in buses and followed their teacher through the loud rooms of the Dr Pepper bottling plant. The father called the bench a pew and said it had come out of the Episcopal church downtown, which her mother had pointed out to her one day, claiming all the people who worshipped there were stuck-up drunks. The babysitter wondered why anyone would put a church pew in a hallway. It was hard and it hurt her back but she sat there every day during naptime, listening for the baby (who was not really a baby anymore; she was almost 3, but the babysitter had answered an ad for a babysitter and so the baby in her mind was a baby) to stop chastising her stuffed snake. She stared at the carpet, which the mother had once referred to as a "runner." It seemed to the babysitter that this couple had their own words for everything and that it did not change what the things were, so as soon as they were gone she would take the child into the kitchen and pull things out of the drawers and say to the child, "What is this?" "Spoon," the child would say and the babysitter would say, "Damn right, it's just a spoon."

"Stop it," the babysitter heard the child say to her snake. Finally the babysitter heard the light ragged sleep-breath of the baby. The babysitter knew that the child's breathing would always sound alarmingly syncopated because she had had a baby herself, though the baby was taken away from her, a fact that the couple with the huge hallways could never know. Breath rose and it fell; it stopped and started no matter how much you wanted it to be even and regular. Nevertheless, the babysitter wanted it for the baby. And she wanted it for herself.

Behind the door at the end of the hallway rose the attic stairs. On warm days not yet hot enough for air-conditioning, the door was open to allow a fan to cool the upstairs of the house. On those days she was told to leave the windows in the sun porch open just a few inches so the fan would draw the breeze, but the fluttering curtains terrified the child and she stood up in her crib crying about ghosts, and so the babysitter closed the windows and the child soaked the sheets of the crib with sweat and woke cross and the babysitter said to her, "Well, which is it? You have to choose. Either you see ghosts or you burn up." Today the windows were open. There was a breeze. The babysitter had never actually seen the fan, but it sounded monstrous and disturbing, like the loathsome snarling that filtered most days through the woods surrounding the trailer. Chain saws, backhoes, neighbor boys riding ATVs through the cabbage fields. Even so far from town, machines drowned out the birdsong, the rustle of wind through pine needles that the babysitter remembered hearing when she played in the dirt yard when she was not much older than the sleeping baby.

Today the fan was off and the door was shut. The child was asleep — and would be for an hour at least. The babysitter pushed open the door into a heat that she understood well from living in a treeless field through summers when there was no money to run window units. The sloped roof had nails sticking out of its boards. Pink thick blankets of insulation stretched into corners so faraway dim she wasn't sure the attic had an end. The floor was strewn with suitcases, as if the father, home from a trip, had tossed the bags from the top of the stairs. The babysitter had never owned or even seen inside a suitcase because she had never been on a real trip. Once a boyfriend was taking her to Kings Dominion, but her extra clothes and makeup and toothbrush were stuffed in a plastic sack, and before they even crossed the Virginia line her boyfriend got pulled over for speeding and it turned out his license had been suspended. She had to call her mother to come pick her up from the magistrate's office, but her mother's boyfriend Raymond showed up instead and on the endless ride home he called her boyfriend names and told her how worthless she was.

The babysitter opened a red vinyl suitcase and studied the zippered pouches, the compartments for shoes. She stepped over the suitcases, drawn to the light that spilled in from the double doors. Outside was a tiny balcony. The couple probably had a name for this, too, but it had wooden bars and it was a balcony to her. Through the towering steeples of town she saw the drawbridge over the Intracoastal Waterway, raised to let a yacht pass. She was higher than she'd ever been, higher than the pines, a part of the sky, so high she could not be brought down to testify against Raymond and what he did to her, too high to hear her mother claim Raymond was a sweet man who'd had a hard upbringing, how can you say those things about him? Far below she saw her car parked in front of this huge house. Her red Mustang. Ten years old and the back quarter panel was painted with primer and three of the hubcaps were missing but it was the only thing in the world that was hers alone. The sight of it did not make her proud as it once had, but suddenly terrified that it was all she'd ever own, that everything after would have to be shared with the same sort of men her mother brought home, then, three weeks or months later threw out. The babysitter went inside and turned on the fan. It was burning up inside the attic. It took a few seconds for the fan to come to life but when it did it was so loud she knew she would not hear the baby should the baby wake and cry out. She knew she should go down, but she wanted the doom she'd felt to be blown right through her by the breeze sucked from the sky by the fan. "At least I won't ever have so many things I have to make up names for them," the babysitter said into the wind, and the fan chopped her words up so that they resembled sleep-breath and sent them down to the baby, who woke to see, through the bars of her crib, the billowing skirts of the woman whose house this once was, come again to swish along the corridor in search of the husband who had never returned from the sea.

Michael Parker's new fiction, "Widow's Walk", is published by permission of the author, a UNCG professor of creative writing and fiction and author of five novels, with a sixth on the way.

Joanna

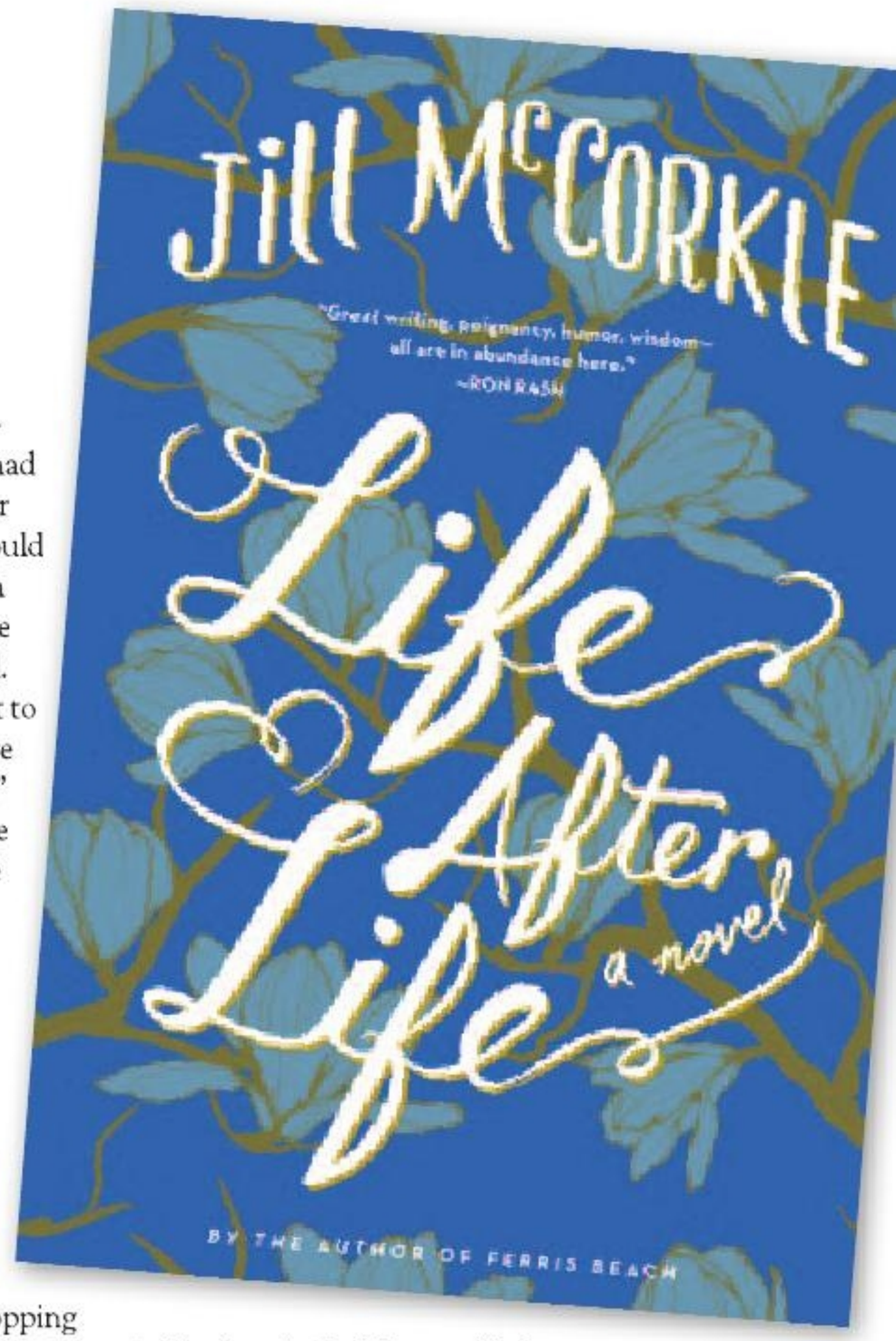
By Jill McCorkle

Now Joanna is holding the hand of someone waiting for her daughter to arrive. Only months ago, this woman — Lois Flowers — was one of the regulars in Pine Haven's dining room where the residents often linger long after the meal for some form of entertainment or another. She was a woman who kept her hair dyed black and never left her room without her hair and makeup and outfit just right. She had her color chart done in 1981 and kept the little swatches like paint chips in the zippered section of her purse. She told Joanna that having your colors done was one of the best investments a woman could ever make. "I'm a winter," she said. "It's why turquoise looks so good on me." She loved to sing and some nights she could convince several people to join in; other nights she simply stood in one corner and swayed back and forth like she might have been in Las Vegas singing everything she knew of Doris Day and Rosemary Clooney and Judy Garland. She loved anything Irving Berlin had ever written. Now she has forgotten everything except the face of her daughter, random lyrics, and that your shoes and purse should always match. Joanna has watched the daughter night after night leaning into her mother's ear to sing — first upbeat *(clang, clang, clang went the trolley)*. She always ends with one of her very favorites like "It Could Happen to You" or "Over the Rainbow" or "What'll I Do?" Joanna — as ordered by Luke's many rules — keeps a notebook with an entry on each of the people she sits with. She has to do an official one to turn over to the nurse who oversees her work, but this is a different, personal notebook she writes just after someone has died. It's a notebook she bought and showed Luke to prove to him that she was taking his assignments seriously — a bright yellow college-ruled spiral-bound notebook, which was all she could find at the Thrifty Market there close to Luke's house. It was near the end for him so she didn't venture far. "This is my page," he told her. "Everybody should get at least a page." She writes what she knows: their names and birthplaces and favorite things. Sometimes she asks questions: What is your first memory? Your favorite time of day or holiday or teacher or article of clothing? How would you describe your marriage? Was there something you learned in your life that surprised you? She records the weather and season and last words if there are any. Luke said that *this* would be her religion, the last words and memories of the dying her litany. She should read and reread the entries regularly like devotionals. *Keep us close,* he said. *Keep us alive. Don't ever let us disappear.*

******

Notes about: Lois Elizabeth Malcolm Flowers
Born: July 14, 1929. **Died:** Friday, June 7, 2010, at approximately 10:35 a.m. Pine Haven Retirement Facility, Fulton, North Carolina.

It was a warm sunny day, drapes fully opened to let all the light in, just as Lois Flowers always requested. The room was comfortable; somehow in spite of all the stark nursing apparatus, the room was as warm and welcoming as Lois herself. On the very first day, she invited me in and told me how lovely it was to have me there. *Not the ideal situation,* she said, *but still lovely to see you.* She said she had not known my parents well but sure did like those hot dogs my dad made, especially the Chihuahua because whoever heard of putting hot salsa on a plain old hot dog? Lois Flowers loved music and she loved fashion. She had a subscription to *Vogue* that had never lapsed in over forty years. "You could never get away with outfits like that here in Fulton," she said. "But it is important to know what folks are wearing elsewhere." She loved turquoise and the way people complimented her when she wore it. "I'm a winter," she liked to say, and referred often to a folder labeled "Personal Color Harmony" and all the little color samples within. She never went shopping for clothes or lipstick without it. Her favorite holiday was Halloween because she loved to see children having so much fun, but mainly because she liked a good excuse to wear orange even though her chart said that winters *do not wear orange well.* She decided that even if she looked horrid, *so what? It was Halloween, but,* she said, *I looked quite striking in an orange alpaca sweater and black gabardine slacks. It's the one time the chart got it wrong.* She still had the orange sweater and insisted that I take it and promise to wear it every October 31. She gave her daughter, Kathryn, the newer Halloween sweater, a honey-colored cashmere with black cat and witch hat buttons. *Kathryn is a true autumn and that sweater is perfect for her,* she said. *You can see why I want everything perfect for her.* She suggested I rethink the way I wear my hair and then put a hand to her mouth and apologized for such a rude remark. "This is all new," she told me. "This way I say things I don't mean to say," and I was able to assure her that I completely understood and that I am reconsidering what to do with my hair. She smiled and blew me a kiss. She said, how about some golden highlights and something layered to give body?


Jill McCorkle
"Great writing, poignancy, humor, wisdom — all are in abundance here."
—RON RASH
Life After Life
a novel
BY THE AUTHOR OF FERRIS BEACH

She had matchbooks from every nice restaurant she had ever gone to. Her favorites were Tavern on the Green and Windows on the World. She said she loved eating in New York City. She said her husband teased her that all it took for her to love a restaurant was for it to be in New York City and have lots of windows and a preposition in the name. She told Kathryn she needed to get back there, that they should take a trip and see a show. When told that both restaurants were gone, she held a firm position that she *still* needed to go there. "And so do you!" she said, always pulling me into the conversation. "And if there's not a young man in your life" (she asked me often if I had met anyone interesting), she said that I should just go alone. "Women do that now," she said. "A woman can go wherever she wants right by herself."

Once, while her husband and Kathryn were out at the County Fair, Lois Flowers burned her Maidenform bra in a hibachi in their backyard.

When her husband asked *what's that smell?* she said she had no earthly idea. She said it made her feel connected to something big and important, that she stood there in the backyard and pretended she was at a rally in New York City. She never told him what she had done, even when she saw him studying the ashes and what looked like a scrap of nylon. She had never even told anyone about it until that day; she said, *I have always felt liberated.*

Her last words were to Kathryn, spoken two days before she died. "Honey, do you have homework?" She had asked that question hundreds of times over the years and if Kathryn did *not* have homework, the two of them went shopping. Lois Flowers loved her daughter and she loved to shop. Kathryn said that all of their important conversations took place during those little shopping trips. What to expect when you start your period. Why you got that bad grade. Why a sassy mouth is not a good thing. How your reputation is your most prized possession. Why you should always do your best. Why good hygiene is a must. What boys do and do not have good sense about or control over. These topics were often whispered over the lunch counter at Wood's Dimestore where Kathryn got a cherry Coke or a milkshake and Lois got a cup of black coffee, her red lipstick staining the fat lip of the heavy white mug. Sometimes they ate pie or got a hot dog and always they were flanked with a bag or two of things they had found to buy over at Belk or the Fashion Bar or Smart Shop. "I can't wait to get home and see what all we got," Lois would say many times, and Kathryn said that once home, her mother kept the excitement going for many more hours with a fashion show and then talk of all the places Kathryn would go to wear the new things and all the wonderful things that would happen as a result. "Her predictions were not often right," Kathryn said. "But she was sincere."

I hugged my orange alpaca sweater close as I waited there with Kathryn. I wanted to tell her how lucky she was to have had such a relationship with her mother, but it was clear that she knew this. She held firmly to her mother's hand for as long as she was able, and then when the men came to take her mother away, she reached for my hand as we followed them out. I will miss them both very much.

[page 77, Joanna's notebook]

Life After Life, *published by Algonquin Books of Chapel Hill in 2013, is excerpted by permission of the author, Jill McCorkle. Author of six novels and four collections of short stories, McCorkle teaches creative writing in the MFA Program at NC State University.*

PHOTOGRAPH BY CASSIE BUTLER TIMPY

Jill McCorkle

Currently reading: *The View from Penthouse B* by Elinor Lipman

Perennial favorite book: *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*

Favorite new author: Megan Mayhew Bergman

Literary guilty pleasure: True Crime

Where do you plan to get away this summer to read? I hope to get to the beach but I also love just being home and sitting on the screened porch.

Quintessential summer read: I read *In Cold Blood* in the summer many years ago and it's one that I have returned to many times with an eye for examining Capote's style and structure, and then once again I get pulled into the story.

Trees *of* Life

Glorious live oaks, summer hydrangeas and secret letters in a clock shape family life for Brenda and Bill Barker

By Jim Dodson

Photographs by Mark Steelman

"I look at these trees every day of my life," says Brenda Barker. "It's like they guard our lives here, giving us shade and so much pleasure. I'm always reminded of what a joy they have been to my family, especially my husband and grandchildren, who love them dearly. I love to think about how they've sheltered others who lived in this spot before us, real gifts from God."

The trees she means are a pair of magnificent — and possibly historic — Southern live oaks that dominate the backyard of the splendid Lowcountry-style home where Barker and her husband, Bill, reside near the end of Bradley Road. A pair of wind-sculpted giants have stood for centuries against the vagaries of season and tide like ancient sentinels on the shore of Bradley Creek, directly across the water from Airlie Gardens.

Fifteen years ago, after parting with their beloved home on Mott's Cove, following a fruitless search for a replacement home they might love with equal ardor, the Barkers happened upon the property on the north flank of the Orleader Memorial Cemetery near the Bradley Creek Marina. As Brenda describes it, the house and property were anything but a realtor's showcase.

"The house was an ordinary house built in the fifties and not in the best of shape because of Hurricane Fran [which blew through Wilmington the year before, 1996]. There was also a handsome old cottage on the property that had been sitting vacant since the hurricane, and at least twenty trees — including many of the mature live oaks and pines — that had been knocked over, some still uncleared. In short, it was a mess."

But the minute Brenda saw it, she knew they were home.

"I think I'd been driving Bill a little crazy," she concedes with a laugh. "We'd looked everywhere for a new home, on Figure Eight and all the communities near the water, but nothing really spoke to me."

What spoke loudest to Brenda, a gardener since her childhood days in Gainesville, Georgia, and Bill, a forensic CPA and financial advisor, were the spectacular live oaks that stood in the yard just yards from the edge of the creek — though the stress of the recent tempest had clearly taken their toll on the magnificent specimens as well.

"To see them then," Brenda recounts, "you might have thought they were dying. The hurricane had stripped away most of their leaves and broken some limbs, and by the look of them, especially the smaller one, it wasn't even clear they would survive."

Even as they hatched a plan to live in the existing house until they could replace it with the Lowcountry-style house Brenda had once seen in a magazine, one of the first orders of business was to save the guardian oaks of Bradley Creek.

The arborist the couple retained gave them some good news — namely that Southern live oaks are surprisingly rugged survivors. Given sufficient healing time and proper amounts of moisture, live oaks are commonly capable of making full recoveries from the stress of extreme weather conditions and cyclonic events like Hurricane Fran.

Among the most enduring and notable historic trees of the South, including dozens of equally splendid specimens just across the creek in Airlie Gardens, Southern live oaks were once prized by early American craftsmen for their dense and tensile strength, prized in the manufacturing of everything from fine cabinetry to naval flooring. Their physical grandeur and impressive lifespans eventually spawned a movement to recognize and preserve outstanding surviving specimens, often found on the grounds of former plantations and old estates, like the centuries-old live oak in New Orleans' Audubon Park whose image became a living symbol — widely used in everything from films to environmental causes — aptly named the "Tree of Life." Today the Live Oak Society collects and maintains information on more than 100 ancient live oak trees with ages ranging from 200 to 400 years, and there is a process for registering mature live oaks of a certain vintage.

The arborist employed mulch rings and used special stakes at the drip lines of the Barkers' oaks to replenish their soil with moisture and estimated the trees — which measure roughly 13 feet in diameter — to be anywhere from 350 to 400 years old, which suggests they predate the formation of the colony of North Carolina. Whatever the truth of it, with a little time and TLC, the

Guardians of Bradley Creek came gloriously back to life in almost no time, relative to their ancient age.

After four years in the property's original house, Brenda and Bob hired a builder who drew up the plans for Brenda's dream home and created exactly what she wanted — a Lowcountry home that featured five porches and windows galore, the perfect place for their three dogs and four grandchildren to savor life under the oaks on Bradley Creek. "We wanted an inviting house that felt at home in its environment, a place that would make everyone feel at home at the beach and under the shade of these amazing trees," Brenda says.

Not by accident, the upper limbs of the oaks spread right to the upper porch rails of the house, providing the effect that you are "living in the trees." In fact, Brenda and Bill refer to their top-floor master bedroom as "the treehouse."

Early in the process, inspired by her own girlhood in a Georgia garden, Brenda began landscaping the property with a fantastic array of foundation plantings that included roses, flowering bulbs and a gardenia from her own family's garden down in Georgia. She planted confederate jasmine vines that have swarmed spectacularly over porches and trellises and bunkered the house with a broad variety of hydrangeas that explode into color come high summer in the Cape Fear. Her particular favorites are the "mophead" hydrangeas whose blue and pink heads seem to bob everywhere on the coastal breeze, but there is also an impressive supporting cast of lovely starburst, lace cap and oak leaf varieties that give the grounds beneath the ancient oaks a soothing elegance. Every porch seems to feature a robust urn of ferns or a clever and colorful accent planting of deep red variegated caladiums. One of Brenda's recent talents is learning to dry hydrangea blooms, a tricky proposition she's mastered. Beautiful dried bouquets stand all around the house's interior.

In the pure and timeless context of family, the timing of finishing the house and grooming its grounds, she notes, simply couldn't have been better. "Our four grandchildren were young enough to experience some of their happiest childhood days here. Bill put up a rope swing under the oaks and they played on our dock, and we explored Bradley Creek at low tide in our dinghy and saw dolphins at the mouth of the creek. In the evenings, we've always been treated to lovely music drifting over the water from Airlie's concerts. It's really the magical place I always hoped it would be," says Brenda.

Revealingly, their grandson, Smith Lawson McLean, grew so smitten with his days at his grandparents' place he began leaving small notes of gratitude tucked into the internal works of a small old-fashioned table clock in his bedroom. "I found the letter almost by accident after he'd left one time," recounts his grandmother, growing tenderly emotional. "He was 8 years old and the letter, written in his hand, told me how much he loved being here and described how he would always have the best memories of coming here. Can you imagine that?"

Smith's Nana decided to write him back, tucking her own letter to her thoughtful grandson into the clock for his next visit.

The letter exchanges have never ceased, totaling at least thirty letters of gratitude and commentary passing back and forth through the old clock, though Smith is now 19 and living in New York. "You know," says Brenda, gently wiping her eyes, "we've never even spoken of the clock letters. They just happen — like a story of our grandchildren growing up here." She keeps the letters in a family Bible upstairs.

Which, in a sense, is the perfect coda for a beautiful house buffered by summer blooms and guarded against the vagaries of time and tide by a pair of preserved and well-loved live oaks.

Time, like a tidal creek, moves ever onward. Pretty soon, Brenda notes, her granddaughter, Karma, graduates and is heading off to train as a chef, and not long ago — following a fundraiser for the Historical Society of the Lower Cape Fear — Bill rehung the swing for their youngest granddaughter, Lola's, visit. She's 8 years old and loves coming to Nana's house on the creek.

"I think she especially loves those trees," Brenda says, looking up the magnificent limbs of the larger oak — the one that may soon actually be registered as a historical monarch of the species. "When you are swinging beneath these oak trees and looking out at this very special place, who wouldn't feel this place has been a gift to us all?"

This Old House

A storybook house is reborn in one of Wilmington's first streetcar suburbs

By Ashley Wahl · Photographs by Rick Riccozi

"Our house is very old," says the boy who sprawls across the creaky wooden floorboards of a nursery-turned-bedroom and builds tiny plastic worlds. "Shouldn't we get a new one?"

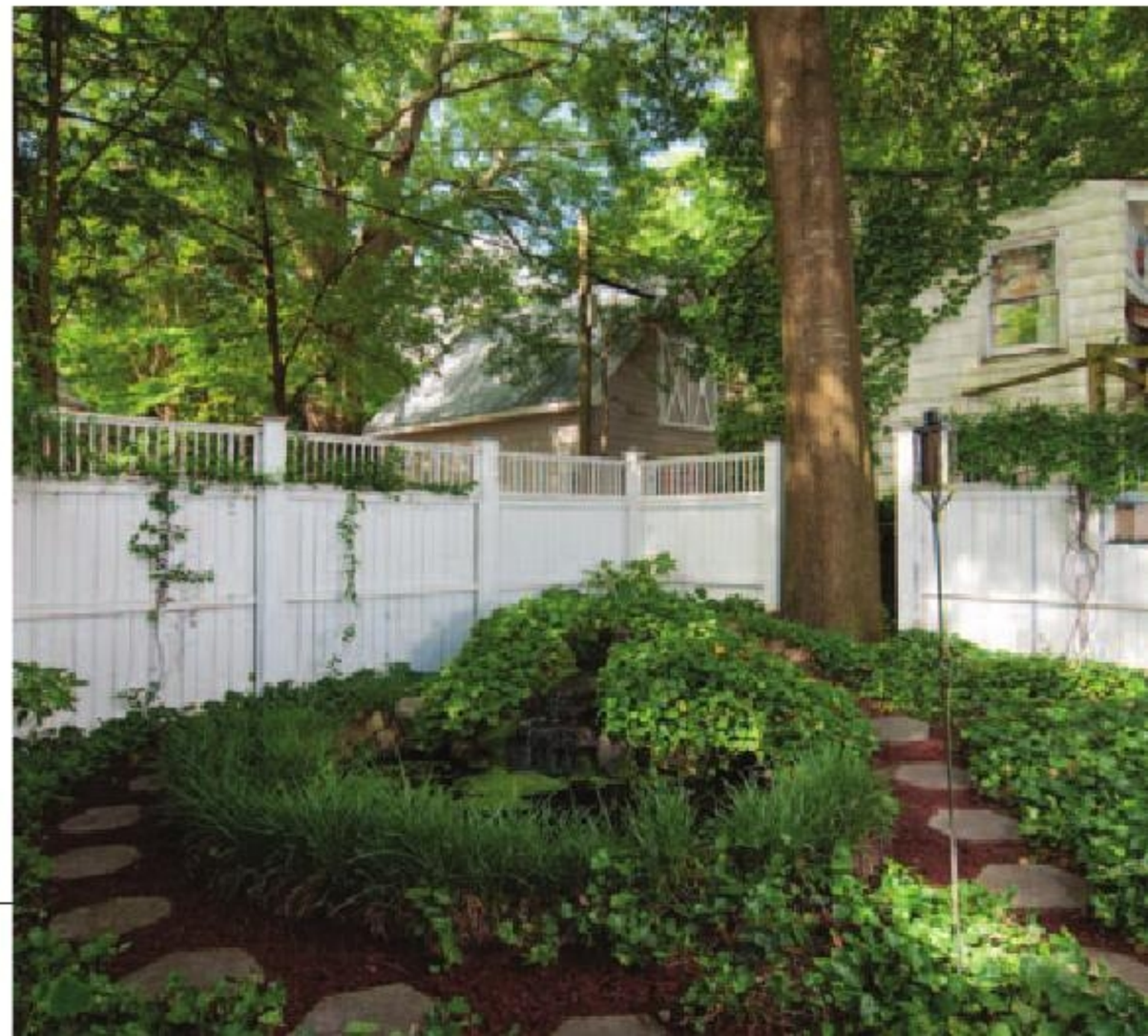
Six-year-old Grayson Trivett has never seen the gambrel-roofed cottage at 1920 Market Street the way his parents can recall it. Through his eyes, this teal-blue Dutch Colonial, which somewhat resembles the shape of a barn, has always had luminous walls and modern appliances and a white lattice-top fence around the backyard garden.

But he knows it's old.

In his cheery upstairs bedroom, where walls are baby blue and Jedi masters orbit 'round the same sun as Spider-Man, a kiddie sleigh bed hosts an armful of beloved characters — Babar the Elephant, Yoda, Lamby and Stitch. Hundreds more live inside his favorite books, neatly stacked along dark wooden shelves.

Grayson's parents, Laura and Kyle Trivett, recall fondly the creaking floorboards of their own childhood bedrooms. Laura grew up scraping and sanding the surfaces of a 225-year-old Pennsylvania farmhouse. Kyle's parents were members of Preservation Greensboro Incorporated. One bitter cold winter, Kyle helped salvage the pine flooring from a historic home in Winston Salem. His fingers still ache at the memory. Both developed a deep-rooted appreciation for old houses, which, if you think about it, are a lot like storybooks.

Located in the Mansion District of Carolina Place, in 1914, 1920 Market Street was a house to behold. Thanks to the Trivetts, this gambrel-roofed Dutch Colonial shines again – in teal blue.



In 6-year-old Grayson's room/world, beloved friends are propped up against Star Wars pillows, busy defending Lego Land, and alive on the pages of his favorite books.

Once upon a time, they tell their son, Grayson, when the city was booming and electric streetcars reigned, an English farmer named Walter Collins and his wife, Wilella, lived here. This was 1914, not long after the development of Carolina Place, one of Wilmington's first streetcar suburbs, bounded by Market Street, Wrightsville Avenue and Wallace Park. Like their neighbors, many of whom worked for the Atlantic Coast Line Railroad, Walter and his wife were charmed by the granolithic sidewalks and large shade trees of Carolina Place, and its tidy little parcels of land.

After Farmer Collins died, the house belonged to a railroad conductor, Willie Avant Jones, Sr. His wife, Nellie, swept the steps of the covered front porch in her finest clothing. She managed two local dress shops and would take the train to New York City to go on buying trips. She lived to be 100.

Preservationist David Scott, who, aesthetics aside, brought the house up to modern standards, converted a pantry beneath the stairwell into a tiny half bath when he lived here. Then Laura bought it. This was 1996, years before she would meet Kyle.

"I'd always lived in old houses," says Laura. "I was looking for an old home."

Drawn to the spirit of Wilmington's historic downtown, Laura searched there first — but "I was 26," she says. "I needed something I could afford."

She needed a fixer-upper. Preferably close to downtown.

The house she found, dingy green with red trim, wasn't exactly what she had in mind. Nor was the neighborhood. Although Laura has become somewhat of an area expert on Wilmington's oldest streetcar suburbs — she helped found the Carolina Place-Ardmore Neighborhood Association and became Marketing Director of Historic Wilmington Foundation — she knew nothing about Carolina Place then. Nonetheless, the wide sidewalks, mature shade trees and grid-like layout of the then-transitional neighborhood drew her there.

Throughout the house, uncluttered walls are earthy-Zen. Guest bedroom (above), Laura's former office, once blushed bright red. Bedroom curtains were handmade by Laura, who puts the added closets to good use.

The Trivetts transformed their now-elegant French country kitchen with floor-to-ceiling storage. Library ladder was a must. Heart pine breakfast bar was salvaged from an old church by Doug Witt, contractor.

The kitchen was as drab and dated as the threadbare linoleum. High ceilings made wall cabinets — one, two, three of them — look scanty and pathetic. Doors, floors and banisters demanded restoration. Closet space was an oxymoron.

But she sensed charm despite the gloomy white walls.

"I saw potential," says Laura.

The old sash windows and inset balconies gave the place character. A little paint and love would go a long way.

Then Laura met a traveling auditor named Kyle, which would change everything.

It happened at an engagement party, two weeks before Laura was scheduled to have brain surgery.

"Get him away from tumor girl," his buddies teased.

But they went to lunch together the next day, hours before Kyle's flight to Wichita, Kansas.

Post operation, Kyle called the hospital to ask for Laura's room number. He'd planned to send her flowers.

"Sir, she's gone," said the ward nurse.

"Once my heart started beating again I asked for clarity," Kyle recalls. "She is gone as in she has been discharged, or she is gone as in she is deceased?"

They laugh about it now.

Between assignments, Kyle caught flights to Wilmington. They spent one of their first dates painting the upstairs bedroom (then Laura's office) bright red. Tools began migrating here from Ohio, Kyle's home base. Kyle followed. He stripped and refinished the dining room mantel while looking for a new job.

Since then, the Trivetts have shaped this house to fit their modern-day needs — and they've restored it for the pure, simple love of preservation.

Projects have ranged from tedious to transformative.

Uncluttered walls are earthy-Zen. Sandy browns stretch from the entryway to the living room (right), and former dining room (left). Beyond: pale greens and cerulean blues. Simple cove molding adds flair.

Doors, floors and banisters have been restored. Original doorknobs, once hidden beneath layers of crusty old paint, were boiled clean in soapy water.

"The paint just falls off," says Laura. They took the trick from *This Old House*.

No need for armoires, says Laura. "We used drywall for the closets. Plaster is a dying art."

But the kitchen and upstairs bathroom are, by far, the most impressive renovations.

To maximize kitchen space, the Trivetts took advantage of those high ceilings. Using graph paper, they designed a French country kitchen with ground-to-ceiling storage — and a sliding ladder befitting of a grand library. Out with the old linoleum, in with sturdy bamboo floors.

Custom-made cabinetry by The Wood Shed mimics the white, glass-paneled interior doors throughout. Local artist Dumay Gorham made the rails and hardware for the ladder, built by contractor Doug Witt.

They saved the ceramic sink and converted a heart pine beam — salvaged from an old church — into a breakfast bar. The former kitchen chimney now stocks cookbooks.

Era-appropriate furniture in dining room from Cape Fear Antiques. Drapes add drama in living room, where a series of English glass paintings hang above the plush brown couch. Below: The Trivett "Wall of History"

The bathroom, in Roslyn blue, hosts original claw foot tub — and art from trips to Saint Lucia.

Below: Doorknobs, once covered in layers of paint, were restored. Also good as new: original doors, floors and windows.

Behind bifold doors: former laundry room turned tool shed turned tiny office.

Upstairs, the Saint Lucia bathroom cost more to renovate than the kitchen.

"Everything had to be re-plumbed," says Kyle. They kept the claw foot tub but installed a modern shower, incorporating marble ledges they found in the house.

Art is sparse, though often sentimental. Above the plush caramel couch: A cluster of glass paintings from England, where Laura was born, depict the changing seasons. On the guest room mantel: blue vases from Shanghai, above which hangs a portrait by Tatyana Kulida Shelley, a Russian-born artist who splits her time between here and Italy.

"This is our wall of history," says Laura, pointing to the black and white photos alongside the staircase.

In the dining room, wedding china and heirloom martini glasses — "Those belonged to Kyle's grandfather" — are displayed in the built-in shelving. Minus red Seussian chairs, era-appropriate furnishings came from Cape Fear Antiques.

If she had to, Laura might give up the king-size sleigh bed in order to keep the antique secretary desk from Marietta Gwathmey, displayed in the back hall space.

"She carries shears in her back pocket," says Laura of Marietta, floral artist and former Historic Wilmington Foundation board member. "She's a magician. I decorate with alstroemeria from Harris Teeter."

What makes this house better yet is the neighborhood, the Trivetts insist. "This is a front porch neighborhood."

"People are out on the sidewalks," says Laura, who is pleased to see the efforts her neighbors are making in preserving the spirit of Carolina Place.

Just recently, Frank Jones, a local attorney, contacted Laura and Kyle Trivett to thank them for restoring his grandparents' home.

Then he shared his boyhood memories. But that's a whole different story.

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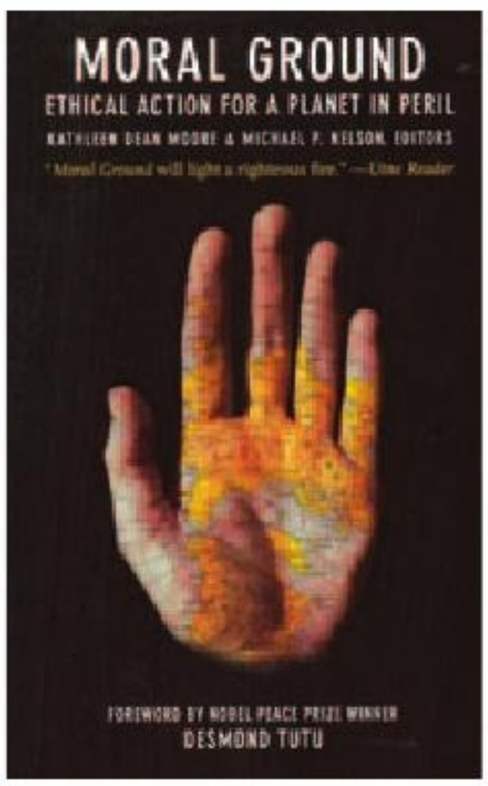
17 Locations in Greater Wilmington

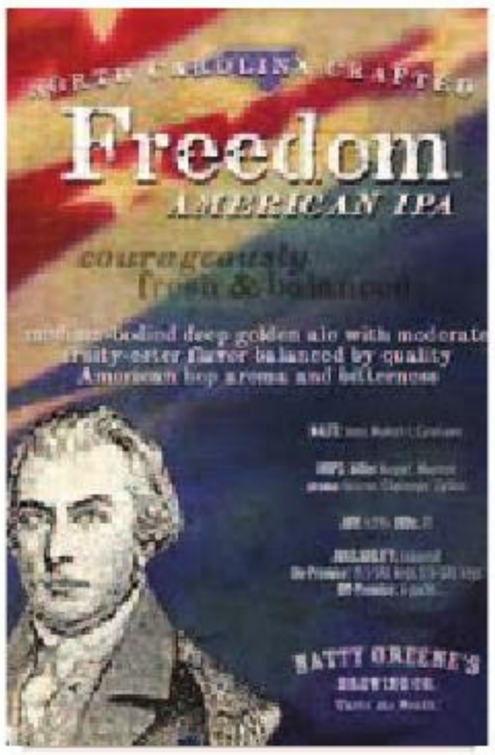
July 2013

Arts Calendar


MORAL GROUND
ETHICAL ACTION FOR A PLANET IN PERIL
KATHLEEN DEAN MOORE & MICHAEL P. NELSON, EDITORS
FOREWORD BY NOBEL PEACE PRIZE WINNER
DESMOND TUTU

Green Book Club

7/2

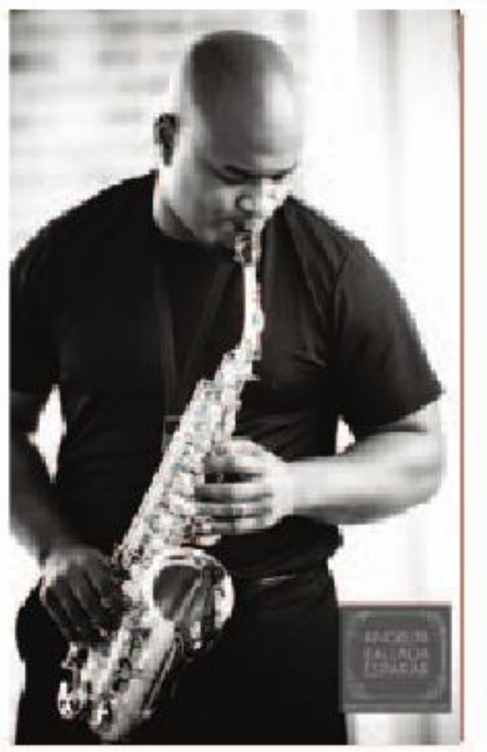


IPA Release

7/5

Book Discussion

7/8



Darryl Donnell Murrill

7/11

7/1–4 4th of July Festival
The North Carolina 4th of July Festival is one of the largest in the state. Includes arts and crafts, live entertainment, activities for kids, parade, fireworks and more. Downtown Southport, Nash and Howe Streets, Southport. Info: (910) 457-5578 or www.nc4thofjuly.com.

7/1 Kayak Eco-Tour
3–5:30 p.m. New Hanover County Parks and Gardens and Hook, Line & Paddle host a guided kayak eco-tour focusing on the flora, fauna and ecosystem of riverine and salt marsh habitats. Admission: $25–$50. Pre-registration required. Airlie Gardens, 300 Airlie Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7707.

7/1–31 Call for Art Submissions
Artists in the greater Wilmington area are encouraged to submit their art — oil, watercolor, pastel, pottery, fabric, jewelry, photography, wood, mixed media, you name it — to the annual Landfall Foundation Art Show and Sale (August 29–31). Cash prizes will be offered for Best in Show. Info: landfallfoundation.org.

7/2 Green Book Club
6:30–8 p.m. *Moral Ground: Ethical Action for a Planet in Peril* (2011) by Kathleen Dean Moore and Michael P. Nelson. Old Books on Front Street, 249 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-6657 or www.oldbooksonfrontst.com.

7/2 North Carolina Symphony
7:30 p.m. Stars and Stripes concert features patriotic favorites and high-spirited classics. Conducted by Matthew Troy. Tickets: $10–$24. Kenan Auditorium, 601 South College Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 962-3500 or www.ncsymphony.org.

7/2–26 Teens Drawing Class
10 a.m. – 1 p.m. Grades 9–12 learn how to draw accurately and realistically. Members: $90. Non-members: $125. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

7/3–7 Live Theater
8 p.m.; 3 p.m. (Sunday) Opera House Theatre Company presents the rocking and life affirming *Rent*. Directed and choreographed by Kendra Goehring-Garrett. Admission: $27. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

7/4 Independence Day Celebration
5–8 p.m. An evening of fun at the Children's Museum of Wilmington. Activities: Air Rocket Challenge, Sharpie Fireworks, Sound Sandwich noisemakers, and Soda Explosions. Order dinner or pack a picnic. Admission is half price with military ID. Children's Museum of Wilmington, 116 Orange Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 254-3534 or www.playwilmington.org.

7/4 Shop Hop
5–9 p.m. Nine boutiques offer fashion forward ladies exclusive deals and first dibs on new styles every first Thursday. Participating boutiques: Edge of Urge, Island Passage, Aqua Fedora, The Wonder Shop, aMuse, Lure, Return Passage, Glam, and Momentum Surf and Skate Shop. Downtown Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtondowntown.com.

7/4 Jazz at the Mansion
6:30 p.m. Bring blankets or chairs and relax on the lawn with live music from The Jeff Sipe Trio. Beer and wine available for purchase. General admission: $12; Members: $10; Students: $10. Bellamy Mansion, 503 Market Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-3700 or www.bellamymansion.org.

7/4 4th of July Cruise
6:30–9:30 p.m. Board North Carolina's largest riverboat and celebrate Independence Day with front row seats to the Battleship Blast Fireworks show plus buffet dinner. Henrietta III, Riverwalk, 101 South Water Street. Tickets/Info: (910) 343-1611 or www.cfrboats.com.

7/4 Battleship Blast
9:05 p.m. *USS North Carolina* Battleship's annual fireworks spectacular. Downtown Wilmington. Info: www.battleshipnc.com.

7/4–6 Magic Show
8 p.m. Magician Kevin Lee. Browncoat Pub & Theatre, 111 Grace Street,

Battleship 101

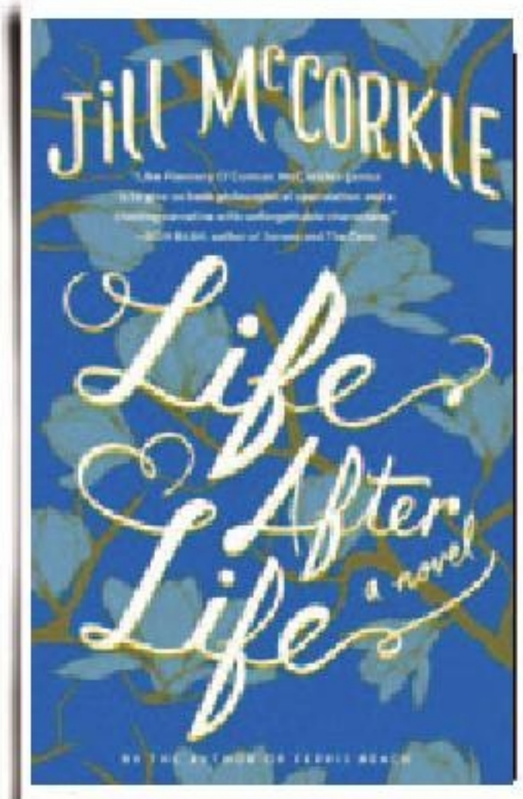
7/13

Wilmington. Info: (910) 341-0001 or www.browncoattheatre.com.

7/4–6 Live Standup
7 p.m. (Thursday); 8 & 10 p.m. (Friday and Saturday) International headliner Alonzo Bodden. Admission: $13–$15. Nutt Street Bar & Comedy Room, 255 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-7881 or www.nuttstreet.com.

7/5 Downtown Sundown Concert
6 p.m. Live music from Revival, An Allman Brothers Experience; Bootleg Dynasty opens. Free concert; beer and wine available for purchase. Wristband nonprofit partner: Access/Miracle League of Wilmington. Riverfront Park, 5 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtondowntown.com/downtownsundown.

7/5 Music on the Town
6 p.m. Live music from 40 East. Free admission. Coolers, chairs and blankets welcome. Mayfaire Town Center, 6835 Main Street, Wilmington. Info: www.mayfairetown.com.



Book Discussion

7/15

7/5 Airlie Summer Concert
6 p.m. Cosmic Groove Lizards, local Americana/folk/alternative rock band, perform on the Oak Lawn at Airlie Gardens. Tickets: $8/adults; $2/children. General admission parking is offsite. Free parking and shuttles are provided from the Old Cinema 6 property at 5335 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7700.

7/5 IPA Release Party
8 p.m. ILM Unplugged presents the Natty Greene's Freedom American IPA Release Party featuring live music by Cory Chisel & the Wandering Sons, Onward Soldiers, and Barnraisers. Admission: $10–$12 The Soapbox, 225 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-8500 or www.thesoapboxlive.com.

7/6 Black River Talk
9–10 a.m. Angie Carl, fire specialist and land steward, presents this educational seminar. Free pancakes from 8 – 9 a.m. Cape Fear River Watch, 617 Surry Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-5606 or www.capefearriverwatch.org.

Jack Jack 180 Performs

7/19

7/8 Prologue
7 p.m. Join Ben Steelman of *StarNews* and guest David Macinnis Gill for light refreshments and a discussion of the author's new book, *Shadow on the Sun*. MC Erny Gallery at WHQR, 254 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-1640 or www.whqr.org.

7/8–12 Tweens & Teens Clay Class
10 a.m. – 1 p.m. Grades 6–8 hand build face jugs, animals, sculpted portraits, slab and coiled containers. Members: $90. Non-members: $125. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

7/10 Black River Nature Cruise
10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Experience miles of scenic wilderness during Wilmington's original Black River Nature Cruise. Narrated by coastal ecologist and author Andy Woods. Refreshments provided. Tickets: $59. Board at Battleship North Carolina Dock. Info: (910) 343-1611 or www.cfrboats.com.

Live Theater

7/26-28

7/10 Summer Evening Nature Series
6 & 7 p.m. *Birds of Prey*. An up-close-and-personal look at: pregrine falcoln, barred owl and Eastern screech owl. Pre-registration required. Admission: $5. Halyburton Park, 4099 South 17th Street. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

7/11 Music in the Courtyard
7–8:15 p.m. Live music from Darryl Donnell Murrill and A Step Above, saxophone-driven old and new school rhythm and blues with smooth jazz influences. Members: $5. Non-members: $10. Cameron Art Museum Courtyard, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

7/12 Kids Mystery Theatre
9 a.m. The Dock Street Kids from TheatreNow are mixed up in one mysterious adventure after another. Help them use the library to solve their cases — like Scooby Doo performed live for ages 8 and older. Northeast Regional Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6373 or www.nhclibrary.org.

7/12 Downtown Sundown Concert
6 p.m. Live music from Same As It Ever Was, the Talking Heads Tribute; Kentucky Gentleman opens. Free concert; beer and wine available for purchase. Wristband nonprofit partner: Historic Wilmington Foundation, Inc. Riverfront Park, 5 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtondowntown.com/downtownsundown.

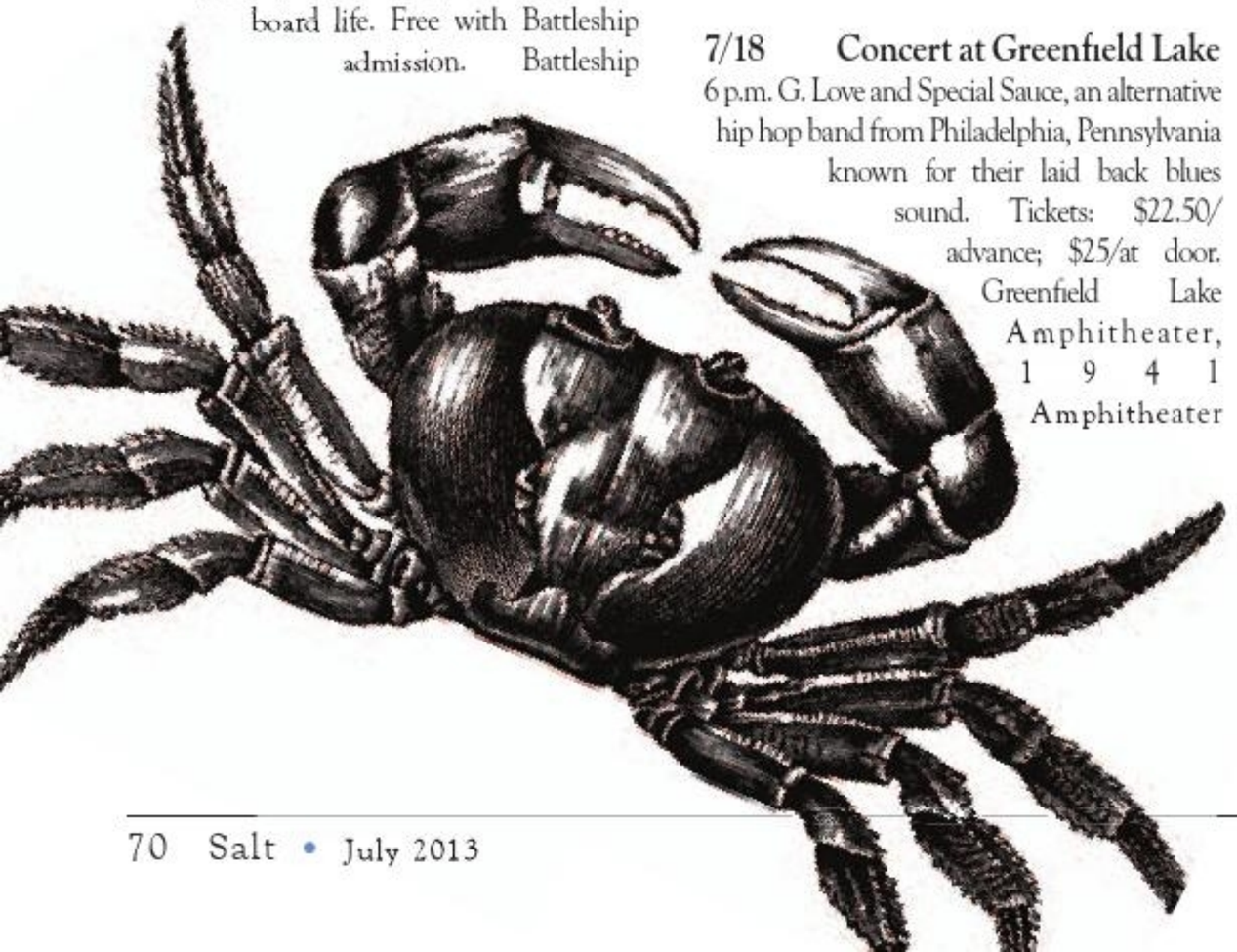
7/12 Music on the Town
6 p.m. Live music from Millenia Funk'n. Free admission. Coolers, chairs and blankets welcome. Mayfaire Town Center, 6835 Main Street, Wilmington. Info: www.mayfairetown.com.

7/12–14 Live Theater
8 p.m.; 3 p.m. (Sunday) Opera House Theatre Company presents the rocking and life affirming *Rent*. Directed and choreographed by Kendra Goehring-Garrett. Admission: $27. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

7/13 Car Show
9 a.m. Classy-Chassis Car Show and Arts & Crafts Market features vintage vehicles, food, music, 50/50 drawing, and flea market that includes fine art, photography, woodwork, jewelry and more. Rain date: Sunday, July 14. Poplar Grove Plantation, Wilmington. Info: (910) 686-9518 or www.poplargrove.com.

7/13 Watershed Cleanup
9 a.m. Pull trash and debris from our urban streams on the second Saturday of each month. Visit website for this month's location. Info: www.capefearriverwatch.org or (910) 762-5606.

7/13 Battleship 101
10 a.m. – 3 p.m. Volunteers stationed throughout the ship engage visitors in specific subjects and areas including: gunnery, radar, sickbay, galley, engineering, and daily shipboard life. Free with Battleship admission. Battleship North Carolina, 1 Battleship Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 251-5797 or www.battleshipnc.com.



7/13 Pipeline to a Cure
6–11p.m. Cystic Fibrosis Foundation benefit gala to showcase the connection between surfing and CF. Honoring local and nationally renowned surf celebrities and local sponsors who support finding a cure for CF, event goal is to increase funding awareness to support vital CF research. Admission: $150. Country Club of Landfall, 1550 Landfall Drive, Wilmington. Info: susanw3000@aol.com.

7/15 Prologue
7 p.m. Join Ben Steelman of StarNews and Lumberton native Jill McCorkle, who will discuss her first novel in 17 years, *Life After Life*. The MC Erny Gallery at WHQR, 254 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-1640 or www.whqr.org.

7/15–18 WHQR Summer Pledge Drive
Help WHQR raise funds for quality community-supported radio. Online or on-air at 91.3fm. WHQR, 254 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-1640 or www.whqr.org.

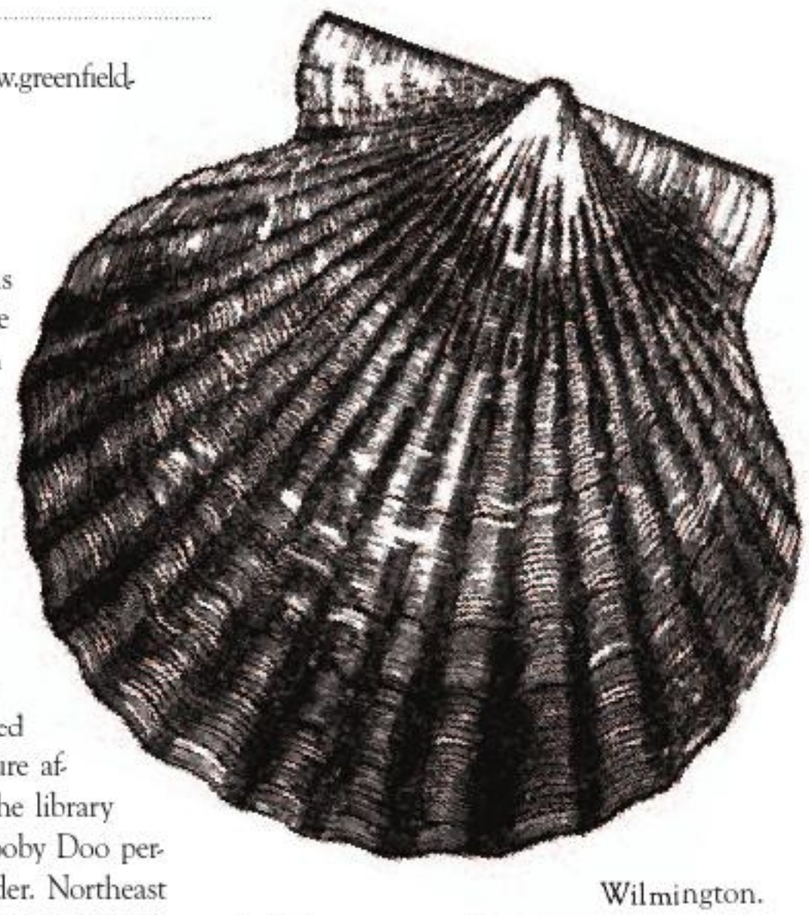
7/15–19 WaterKeeper Camp
9 a.m. – 3 p.m. Teens ages 13–16 will study our river and watershed and gain experience in modern scientific methods including field work, data analysis and finding solutions to minimize negative impacts on local water quality. Cost: $195; scholarships available. Cape Fear River Watch, 617 Surry Street, Wilmington. Info: www.capefearriverwatch.org/education/summer-camps.

7/17 Summer Evening Nature Series
6 & 7 p.m. *Shark Attack*, presented by the North Carolina Aquarium. Pre-registration required. Admission:$5. Halyburton Park, 4099 South 17th Street. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

7/18 Concert at Greenfield Lake
6 p.m. G. Love and Special Sauce, an alternative hip hop band from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania known for their laid back blues sound. Tickets: $22.50/advance; $25/at door. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: www.greenfield-lakeamphitheater.com.

7/18–20 Surf Film Festival
Surfers, nature lovers and fans of good films will enjoy three days of outdoor screenings in Carolina Beach, Wrightsville Beach and downtown Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-5995 or www.cucalorus.org.

7/19 Kids Mystery Theatre
9 a.m. The Dock Street Kids from TheatreNow are mixed up in one mysterious adventure after another. Help them use the library to solve their cases – like Scooby Doo performed live for ages 8 and older. Northeast Regional Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6373 or www.nhclibrary.org.



7/19 Downtown Sundown Concert
6 p.m. Live music from ZOSO, the Ultimate Led Zeppelin Tribute; Brad Heller and the Fustics opens. Free concert; beer and wine available for purchase. Wristband nonprofit partner: OASIS NC. Riverfront Park, 5 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtondowntown.com/downtownsundown.

7/19 Music on the Town
6 p.m. Live music from Velcro, '80s rockers. Free admission. Coolers, chairs and blankets welcome. Mayfaire Town Center, 6835 Main Street, Wilmington. Info: www.mayfairetown.com.

7/19 Airlie Summer Concert
6 p.m. Jack Jack 180 performs on the Oak Lawn at Airlie Gardens. Tickets: $8/adults; $2/children. General admission parking is offsite. Free parking and shuttles are provided from the Old Cinema 6 property at 5335 Oleander Drive, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-7700.

7/19–21 Live Theater
8 p.m.; 3 p.m. (Sunday) Opera House Theatre Company presents the rocking and life affirming *Rent*. Directed and choreographed by Kendra Goehring-Garrett. Admission: $27. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

7/20 Community Paddle
8:30 a.m. Explore a beautiful creek in Pender County and then join the group at Holland's Fish Camp for lunch. Cost: $10 donation per paddler; lunch not included. Cape Fear River Watch members may rent canoes for $15. Cape Fear River Watch, 617 Surry Street, Wilmington. Register: www.capefearriverwatch.org. Info: (910) 762-5606.

7/20 Oakdale Walking Tour
10 a.m. - 12 p.m. Mr. Eric Kozen will share the history of this 150-year-old cemetery. Oakdale Cemetery, 520 North 15th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-5682 or www.oakdalecemetary.org.

7/22–26 Teens Mixed Media Class
2–5 p.m. Grades 9–12 draw, paint, collage and experiment with a choice of materials and techniques. Members: $90. Non-members: $125. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

7/22–26 WaterKeeper Camp
9 a.m. - 3 p.m. Teens ages 13–16 will study our river and watershed and gain experience in modern scientific methods including field work, date analysis and finding solutions to minimize negative impacts on local water quality. Cost: $195; scholarships available. Cape Fear River Watch, 617 Surry Street, Wilmington. Info: www.capefearriverwatch.org/education/summer-camps.

7/24 Black River Nature Cruise
10 a.m. - 2 p.m. Experience miles of scenic wilderness during Wilmington's original Black River Nature Cruise. Narrated by coastal ecologist and author Andy Woods. Refreshments provided. Tickets: $59. Board at Battleship North Carolina Dock. Info: (910) 343-1611 or www.cfrboats.com.

7/24 Summer Evening Nature Series
6 & 7 p.m. *Snakes of NC*, presented by Keith Farmer of the Partners of Reptile and Amphibian Conservation. Pre-registration required. Admission: $5. Halyburton Park, 4099 South 17th Street. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

7/25 Concert at Greenfield Lake
6 p.m. Yonder Mountain String Band. Tickets: $25–$30. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: www.greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

7/26 Kids Mystery Theatre
9 a.m. The Dock Street Kids from TheatreNow are mixed up in one mysterious adventure after another. Help them use the library to solve their cases – like Scooby Doo performed live for ages 8 and older. Northeast Regional Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6373 or www.nhclibrary.org.

7/26 Downtown Sundown Concert
6 p.m. Live music from Big Wooly Mammoth, Widespread Panic Tribute; Velcro opens. Free concert; beer and wine available for purchase. Wristband nonprofit partner: Mercy Homeless Shelter, Inc. Riverfront Park, 5 North Water Street, Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtondowntown.com/downtownsundown.

7/26 Music on the Town
6 p.m. Live music from Painted Man, funk/rock/R&B. Free admission. Coolers, chairs and blankets welcome. Mayfaire Town Center, 6835 Main Street, Wilmington. Info: www.mayfairetown.com.

7/26 Fourth Friday Gallery Night
6–9 p.m. Join 15 local galleries and studios in an after-hour celebration of art and culture on the fourth Friday of each month. Downtown Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtonfourthfridays.com.

7/26 Art Show Opening
6–9 p.m. Water. Proceeds from raffle and donations benefit Cape Fear River Watch. Support the arts and the environment. ACME Studios, 711 North 5th Avenue, Wilmington. Info: acme-art-studios.com; www.capefearriverwatch.org.

7/26 Art Gallery Reception
6–9 p.m. Quilting Outside the Blocks by Maggie Earley. Light refreshments and a look at contemporary picture quilts constructed with a variety of textiles and embellishments. The MC Erny Gallery at WHQR, 254 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 343-1640 or www.whqr.org.

7/26–28 Cape Fear Blues Festival
This year's festival includes the return of the Cape Fear Blues Cruise on the *Henrietta III* riverboat, live Blues in local clubs, a Blues workshop at Finkelstein Music in downtown Wilmington, and an All-Day Blues Jam. Info: www.capefearblues.org or (910) 350-8822.

7/26–28 Beauty and the Beast
7: 30 p.m.; 3 p.m. (Sunday) Brunswick Little Theatre presents the tale of the redemptive power of love based on the French fairy tale, *La Belle et La Bete*. Admission: $6–$17. Odell Williamson Auditorium, Brunswick Community College. Info: (910) 755-7416 or www.bccowa.com.

7/29 Concert at Greenfield Lake
5:30 p.m. Trampled by Turtles and The Devil Makes Three, presented by 98.3 The Penguin. Tickets: $20/advance; $25/day of show. Greenfield Lake Amphitheater, 1941 Amphitheater Drive, Wilmington. Info: www.greenfieldlakeamphitheater.com.

7/29 Cabaret Show
5:30 p.m. Thalian Association and Cape Fear National Golf Course present *Thalian Association in Revue*, a cabaret show and fundraiser celebrating the 225th anniversary of Thalian Association that features vocal performances from its biggest hits and a preview of the upcoming season. Directed by Tom Briggs. Cocktails prelude show and buffet dinner. Tickets: $47.95. Reservations required. Cape Fear National Golf Course, 1281 Cape Fear National Drive, Leland. Info: (910) 202-5811 or www.thalian.org.

7/29 Spiritual Book Club
6–8 p.m. *Nine Parts of Desire* by Geraldine Brooks. Old Books on Front Street, 249 North Front Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 762-6657 or www.oldbooksonfrontst.com.

7/29 – 8/2 Camp Cucalorus
9 a.m. – 3 p.m. A weeklong immersion into the world of music video filmmaking for teens ages 12–17. Camp enrollment: $395. Jengo's Playhouse, 815 Princess Street. Info: (910) 343-5995 or Jill Tefft at development@cucalorus.org.

7/29 – 8/2 Camp Shakespeare
9 a.m. – 4 p.m. Fun theater activities including sword fighting. Members: $175. Non-members: $210. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

7/31 Summer Evening Nature Series
8–9:30 p.m. *Planetarium and Stargazing.* Investigate the Earth/moon/sun system and venture inside Starlab planetarium to explore the stars outside of our solar system, plus take a guided laser stargazing tour of the constellations. Pre-registration required. Admission: $5. Halyburton Park, 4099 South 17th Street. Info: (910) 341-0075 or www.halyburtonpark.com.

7/31–8/4 Live Theater
8 p.m.; 3 p.m. (Sunday) Opera House Theatre Company presents *Oklahoma!*, the classic musical that launched the legendary partnership between Rodgers and Hammerstein. Admission: $27. Thalian Hall, 310 Chestnut Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 632-2285 or www.thalianhall.org.

WEEKLY HAPPENINGS

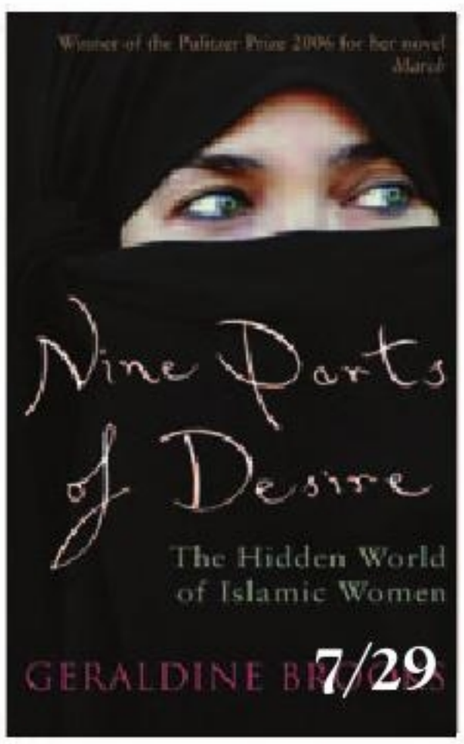
Wednesday T'ai Chi at CAM
12–1 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

Wednesday Free Family Movie
3 p.m. Bring your own snacks and drinks. Weekly through August 7. Northeast Library, 1241 Military Cutoff Road, Wilmington. Info: (910) 798-6373 or www.nhclibrary.org.

Thursday Yoga at CAM
12–1 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. These sessions are ongoing and are open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

Thursday T'ai Chi at CAM
5:30–6:30 p.m. Qigong (Practicing the Breath of Life) with Martha Gregory. Open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

Thursday CAM Public Tours
7:30 p.m. Explore the newest exhibits at Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.



Spiritual Book Club

Jeff Sipe Trio Performs

Classy Chassis Car Show

Cape Fear Blues Festival

Friday **Birding Tours**

9–10 a.m. Join the Audubon North Carolina naturalists on a free guided tour of this fascinating sanctuary where you can get close-up looks at nesting birds and chicks. Every Friday morning through September 13. Wrightsville Beach Public Access 43, North Lumina Avenue. Info: (910) 686-7527.

Friday **Yoga at CAM**

5:30–6:30 p.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. These sessions are ongoing and are open to beginner and experienced participants.Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

Friday **Murder on the Set**

6:30 p.m. An interactive murder mystery dinner show written by Hank Toler. Tickets: $42; $30/children under age 12. TheatreNOW, 19 South 10th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 399-3669 or www.theatrewilmington.com.

Saturday **Farmers Market**

8 a.m. – 1 p.m. Curbside market featuring local farmers, producers, artists and crafters. Riverfront Park, Historic Downtown Wilmington. Info: www.wilmingtonfarmers.com.

Saturday **Yoga at CAM**

10–11 a.m. Join in a soothing retreat sure to charge you up while you relax in a beautiful, comfortable setting. These sessions are ongoing and are open to beginner and experienced participants. Members: $5. Non-members: $8. Cameron Art Museum, 3201 South 17th Street, Wilmington. Info: (910) 395-5999 or www.cameronartmuseum.com.

Saturday
Historic Wilmington Walking Tour

10 a.m. Historic Wilmington Foundation offers two ongoing tours through October 12. The Streetcar Suburbs Tour will focus on Wilmington's first two suburbs, Carolina Place and Carolina Heights and the development of these historic neighborhoods. The Forest Hills Tour will showcase the architectural and cultural history of the neighborhood. The Streetcar Suburbs Tour will meet at the Coastal Shopping Center at 17th St. and Market St. and the Forest Hills Tour will meet at the Forest Hills Elementary School at 602 Colonial Dr. See website for a list of selected Wednesday tours. Admission: $10. Info: (910) 762-2511 or www.historicwilmington.org.

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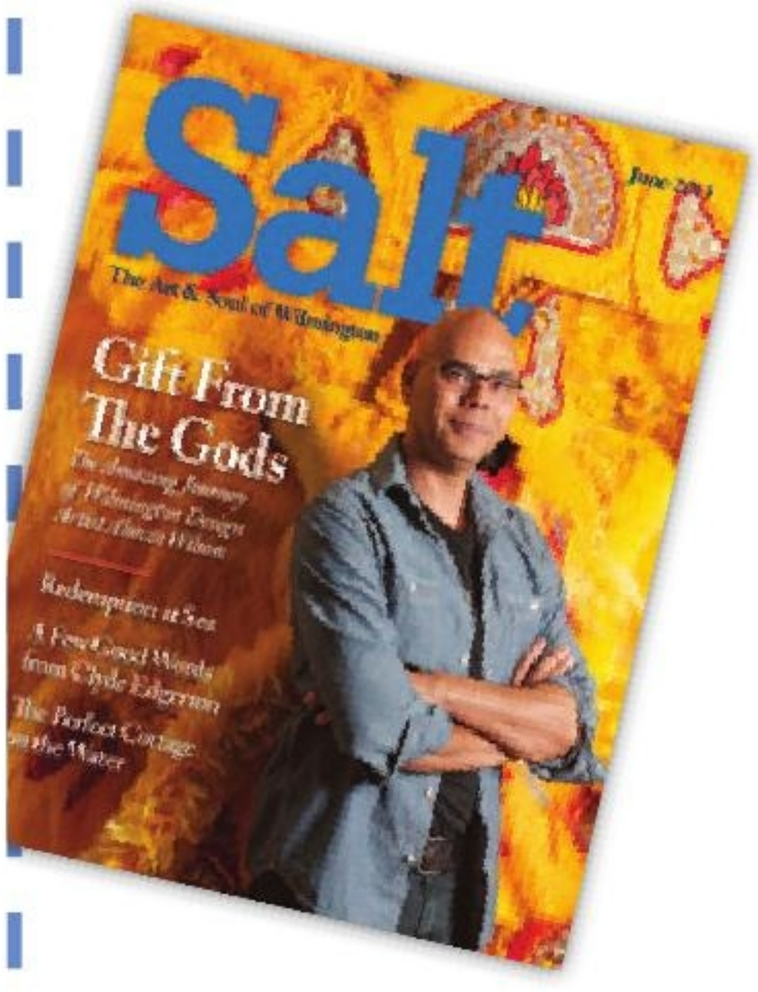

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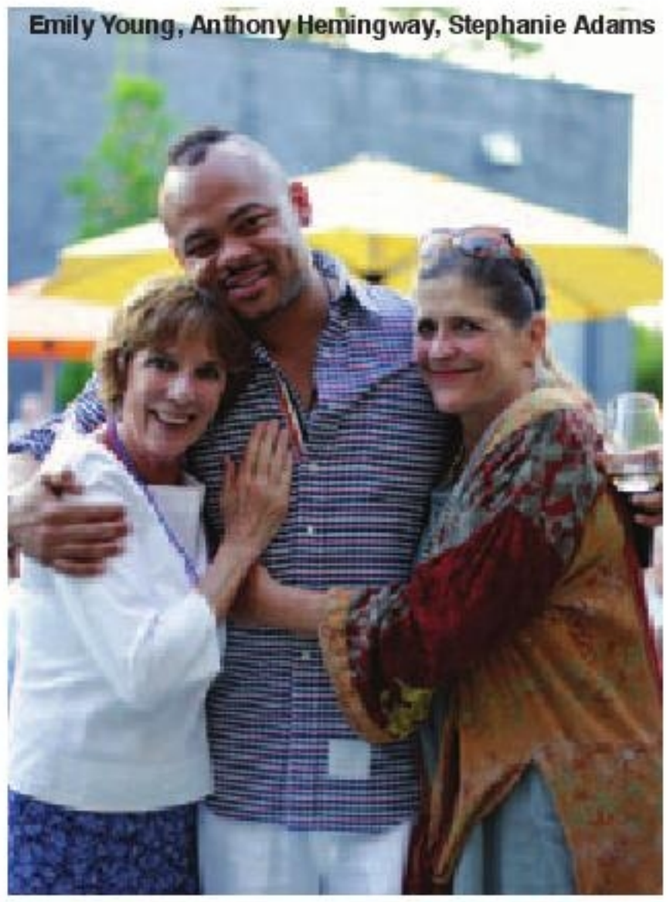
Port City People

Well Suited Opening Reception
at Cameron Art Museum
Friday, May 17, 2013
Photographs by Jill McIlwain

Bob Unchester, Holly Tripman

Jane Wright, Frances Goodman, Sandra Elam, Allene Wright


Emily Young, Anthony Hemingway, Stephanie Adams

Band bassist

Lorenzon Wilson, Ines Campbell-Eason, Daren Bently

Victor Giarrusso, Jess Jarnes

Vicki Scruggs, Bill King, Heather Jones

Rebecca Petruck, Perry Fisher, Renée Dixon

Alonzo Wilson, Bradley Sumrall

Joyce Fernando, Peggy Farrell, Velma Weeks

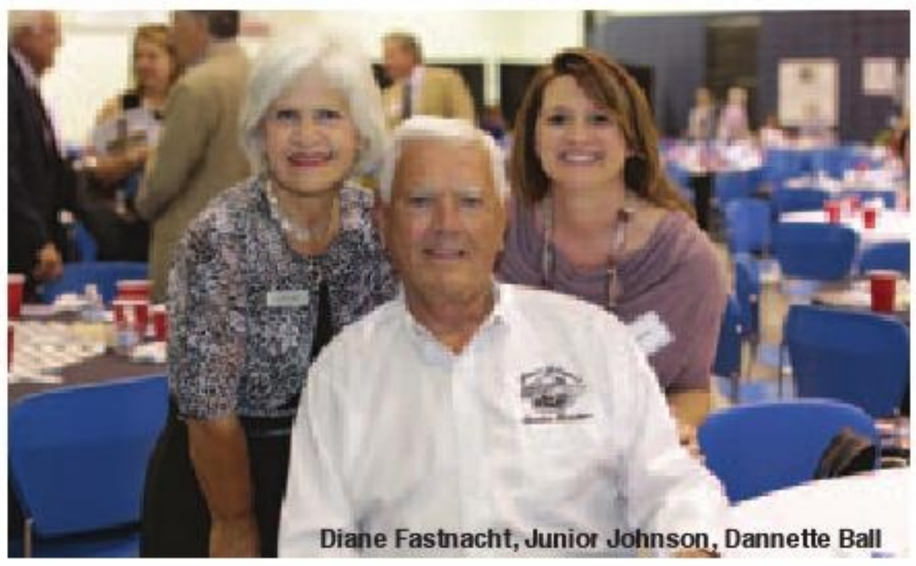
Tony Rivenback, Shane Fernando

Port City People

Gift of Education Luncheon at Cape Fear Community College Thursday, May 16, 2013

Photographs by Jill McIlwain

Terrence Adiko, Rashond Burns, Domonick Gibbs



Diane Fastnacht, Junior Johnson, Dannette Ball

Margrett Robison, Virginia Parker

Sonya Johnson, Meaghan Beam, Gena Walker

Lilliam Newton, Dr. James Robinson, Toppy Robinson

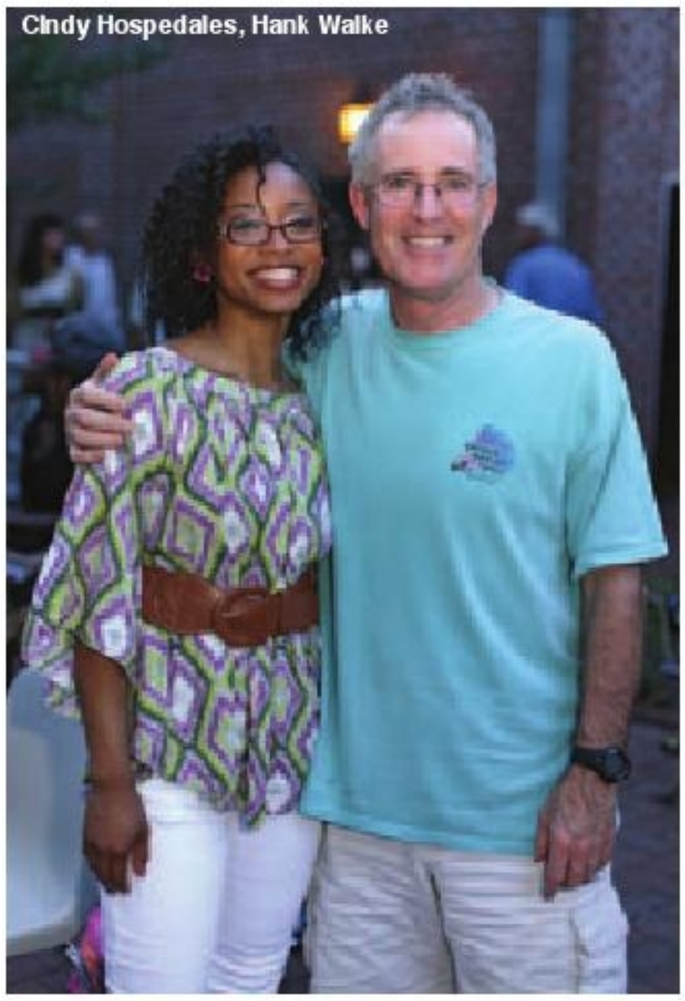
Barren Nobles, Greg Hibiske

Bill Turner, David Hardin

Jamir Jumoke

Port City People

Jazz at the Bellamy Mansion
Thursday, June 13, 2013
Photographs by Jill McIlwain


Cindy Hospedales, Hank Walke

Kathleen Morrison, Carol Bohier, Kimberly Hunt, Primus Robinson

Jordan and Karen

Elizabeth Rogsbee, Stephanie Johnstone, Ashley Bennett

Chloe Gatton, Randy Shackelford

Debbie Johnson, Michael Banning

Marlene Frazier, Carolyn Ferguson

Jen Lipham, Miriam Uiicke, Jeff Clift

Robin Thompson, Sumone Mills Allen, Donna Greery

Kevin Lee-y Green, Singleton Wilson

Julia Walker Jules, Annie Jules

Barbie Rogers, Charlie Baird

Port City People

Third Annual Masonboro Benefit at Bradley Creek Marina Clubhouse Thursday, June 13, 2013

Photographs by Jill McIlwain

Sam Carrico, Annettte Carrico, Patti Erkes, Rachel Erkes, Axel Erkes

Lisa Bower, Lori Kilborne

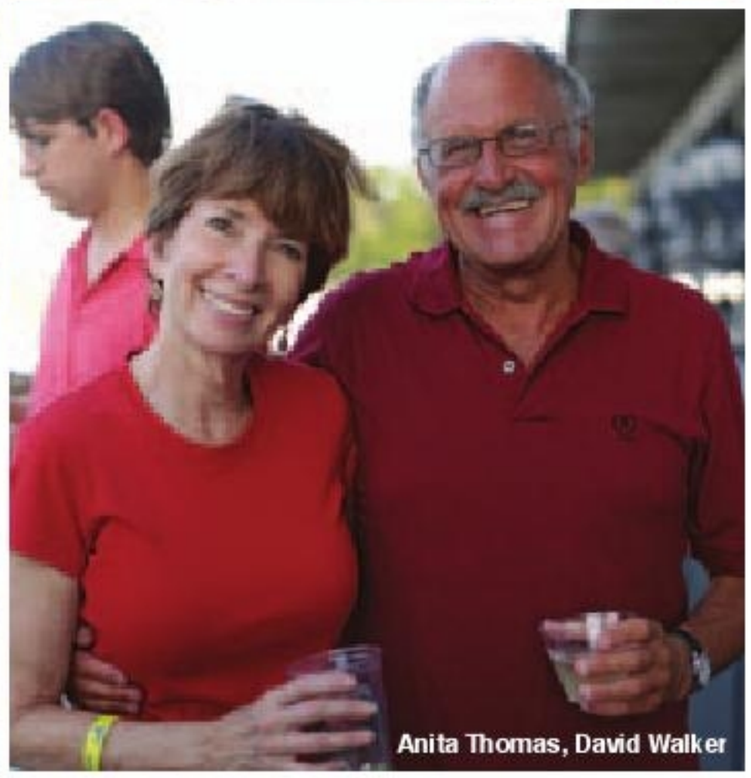
Chris & Rob Stewart, Sandy Cohen

Beth Andrew, Peggy Singer, Kathy Fischer

Bob Bo[illegible]en, Lynn Symonds

Steve & Margaret Diab

Kate Massarelli, Matt Massarelli, Malorie Martino


Anita Thomas, David Walker

Toby and Frances Wells, Joe & Angie Jackson

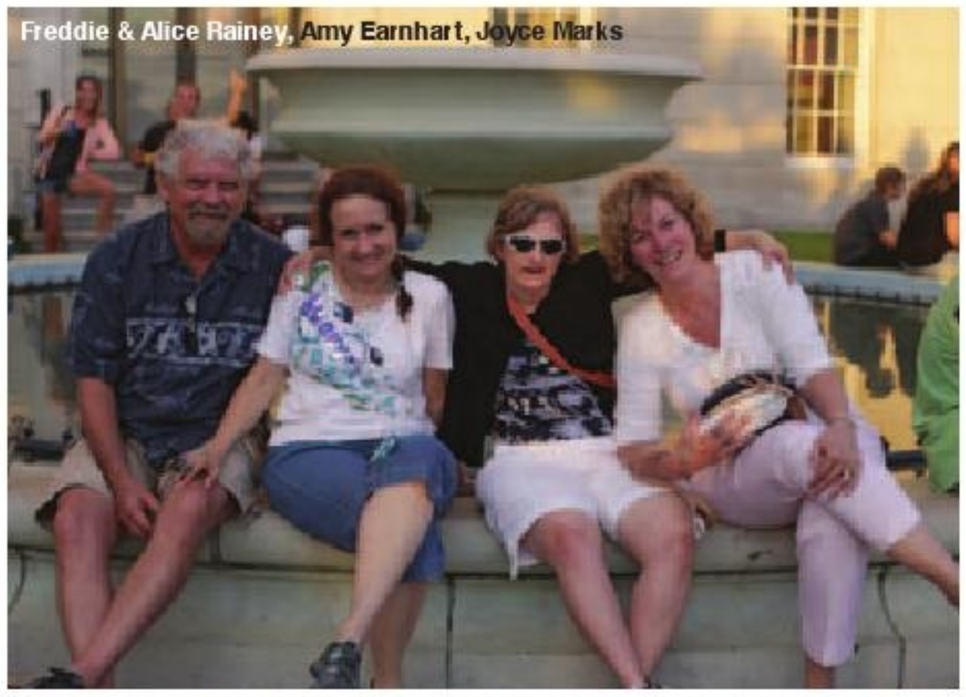
Wallace Family

Mary & Brad Hale

Port City People

Downtown Sundown Concert
Friday, May 24, 2013
Photographs by Jill McIlwain

Liana Fletcher, Jesse Korenowski


Freddie & Alice Rainey, Amy Earnhart, Joyce Marks

Farrah Whorton, John Gurganus

Gary & Jen Solomon

Hula hooper

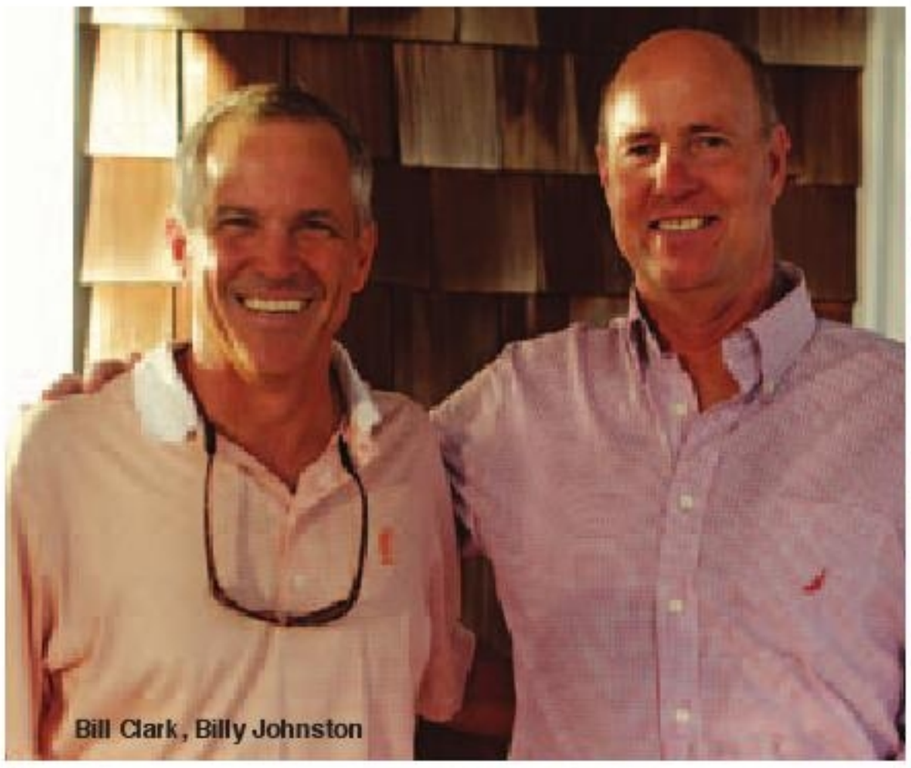
Zach Munden, Taylor Massey

Kirsti Leighton, Taylor Massey, Amber Gerst

Logan Spaller, Megan Chang, Kaitlynne Bryan, Jessica Lama, Noah Ponton

Port City People

American Triumvirate Book Event with Author Jim Dodson at Cape Fear Country Club
Thursday, May 30, 2013
Photographs by Jill McIlwain


Bill Clark, Billy Johnston

Annie Gray Johnston, Jane Marr

Stewart Egerton

Tom Needham, Lynnwood Grissom

Lydia Hines, Drew & Pierson Knox

John Harshbarger, Rich Keegan, Brandon Tise, Jim Williams

Bill Clark, Jane Marr

Jim Dodson, Robert Hobson

Saucy July

Gemini (May 22-June 21)

The wheel may be turning, but the hamster is dead. When the wheel stops, you might wanna try a new plan, my twin. Do that, and Santa's going to bring you some real good news by Christmas. Knock me down and steal my teeth, darlin', cause you also got some surprises that have to do with keeping a tight ship and straightening up. Miss A has to ask you, where the heck is "yonder," anyhow?

Cancer (June 22-July 23)

Luv water parks, my little crab legs? Ready to get wet-n-wild? Put on your water wings or grab a float. Mid-month, a Grand Water Trine slides slap-dab into Cancer with Neptune and Saturn lining up. This Grand Water Trine is the difference between your worn-out self treading water and being on a slip-and-slide, having a Water Bug Ball. You still have some unfinished business, like it or not, but Astrid foresees some very fun times in the hot sunshine.

Leo (July 23-Aug. 23)

On the toughest days, you look like a runaway taxi with all the doors open. Are you coming or going? By the Fourth of July, you'll have fireworks popping like the Battleship Blast — and you may be wailing for self-medication. Miss A. here is just out of detox for the, um, nth time. Ain't any legal substance scarier than retail therapy and a MasterCard! That's right, my little sparkler, cut up the MC and get your shine on some other way, know what I'm saying?

Virgo (August 24-Sept. 23)

Sweet patooty, there's a reason you can always get a dinner date: It's called personal charm. You own the art of the schmooze, and by the 7th, it is downright scary how you can work it, thanks to Jupiter in Virgo. Here's Astrid's position: Until the 23rd, go flat out. Anything is possible. Get footloose like Kevin Bacon. Roll with the good times, happy feet, not under them.

Libra (Sept. 24-Oct. 23)

Sweet pants, you're the grand master of shoulda-coulda-woulda. Never mind. By the 13th, you got a sweet dream all lined up, just waiting for a can't-miss shot! Honey, you going to be hotter than Tiger Woods when he scored Lindsey Vonn — just grin and take home the gold! Pluto got you calling the shots, in that aw-shucks Libra way that would make Colonel Foghorn Leghorn roll over and shut up!

Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

By the 12th, the Sun aligns with Neptune for a big ole cosmic Uh-Oh. Except — you can use your stubborn self to make stuff happen. Just hold on, sister, and stock up on Febreze. Whatever hits ain't much worse than a fart storm at a chili cook off. Things smell better by the 30th. Take the bit in the mouth and just haul destiny out of the ditch. Never forget, you're that strong, little stinger. That stubborn, too!

Sagittarius (Nov. 23-Dec. 21)

Got a pen? Ink in the 4th as a red letter day, as in a day your sweet thang makes you see red and your wild eyes will shoot fire like it's Armageddon! Stay cool — like the AA bumper sticker says, "One Day at a Time!" The sun in the house of love connections comes on like a Baptist preacher at a summer revival. Sometimes love strains the Sagittarian's last nerve — but if I'm lying you can butter my butt and call me a biscuit. Remember: ODAT.

Capricorn (Dec. 22-Jan. 20)

Capricorn dramas can be too twisted for color TV. You want success, and you think nobody else knows? The stink of ambition is rolling off you like after-shave ads in *Esquire* magazine. Until the 8th, miscommunication starts messing with your plans, thanks to Mercury in retrograde. It won't let up until the 20th and by then, there ain't much harmony in the hive. You might just try a little kindness and share the honey if you want happy bees. Astrid's just saying.

Aquarius (Jan. 21-Feb. 19)

You ever seen that Canadian astronaut singing in the Space Station, honey? That cool bit of business has got to be an Aquarian. He's strumming David Bowie while the station's leaking ammonia — but he's down with it. You got Leo influences coming in this month that will blow the doors off the barn — or the wings off the Station. You might just try innovating, because there is no better time than this month to just be your bold self.

Pisces (Feb. 20-March 20)

Here's how July's going to fly: Tranny go outta the car? Just a hiccup. House on fire? No biggie. You are super fly this month, and nothing can mess with your harmonic convergence. You see things with special powers, baby. Good golly, you GOT special powers. You got mojo working and you have never been better at leading and rolling with things. The love train is rolling into the station, too. Finesse it!

Aries (March 21-April 20)

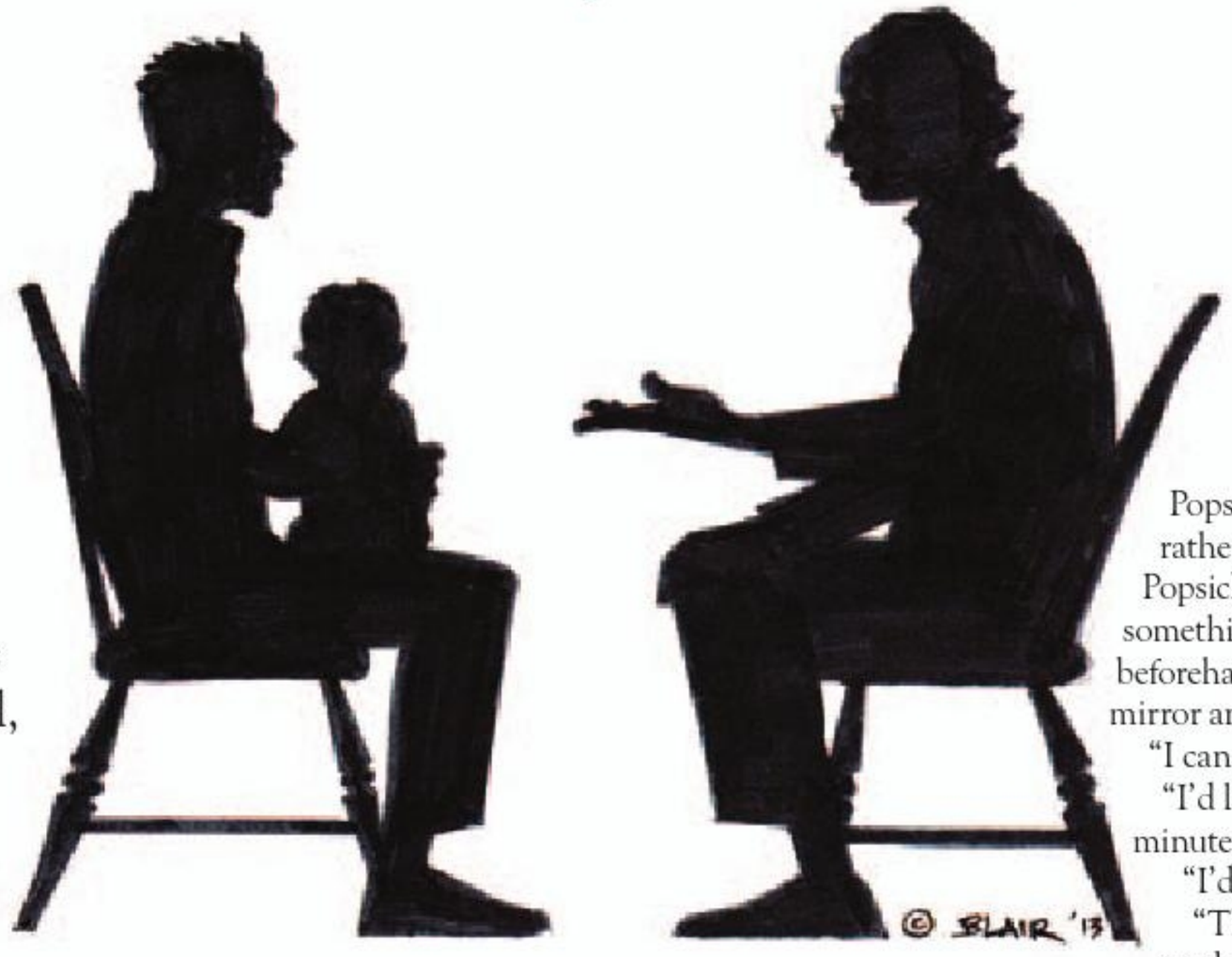
You gripe sometimes when you got a ham under each arm. Try a little patience, hard head. The last half of the month is going to be your kind of month. Rise and shine and hit the gym. This is one of those times when the ram might try focus, instead of world domination. At the end of the day, moisturize, moisturize, moisturize. All that hot ambition can dry your thick hide right out.

Taurus (April 21-May 21)

It's rough when you're buck naked in the pond and lightning's striking. And it's even worse when you're playing water polo with the preacher's wife. If this is love, then hang in there and just be sure she ain't your cousin. She might jar your preserves. And if it is the real thing, love makes this month bearable. Otherwise, you're going to feel more confused than an orphan on Father's Day.

For years, Astrid Stellanova owned and operated Curl Up and Dye Beauty Salon in the boondocks of North Carolina until arthritic fingers and her popular astrological readings provoked a new career path.

Good Advice from a C.O.D.
(Considerably Older Dad)



By Clyde Edgerton

I have a daughter, Catherine, aged 30. I have a 9-year-old son, Nathaniel, a 7-year-old son, Ridley, and a 6-year-old daughter, Truma. I'm 68. The age gap between the younger kids and me is not something I think about much, because I feel, physically, about like I did when I was 40 — or at least I think I do. I think I . . .

I just forgot what we were talking about — age?

I do think about age, and as I write, if I have something to say to older dads (a growing population), I'll insert a short section labeled *C.O.D. — which means it's intended for the Considerably Older Dad. For example:

*C.O.D.

If you read tales from the Brothers Grimm and Hans Christian Andersen (your kids will probably love them), you'll be able to identify words in these stories that are not within the experience of younger fathers. Words like *hearth*, *anvil*, *harness*, *scythe*, *plough*, and *stockings*.

IN-LAWs

If they are dead, your in-laws will probably not interfere with your fathering. But they *may*. Family norms tend to stay around for several generations — things like whether or not presents inside Christmas stockings are wrapped, whether or not shoes should be worn in the house. Whether or not Baby can stay up late at night, or watch television only one hour a day. In other words, even if your in-laws have passed on or live in Nova Scotia, they may still whisper into your wife's ear.

If your in-laws are alive and are reasonable people, you're probably OK. But if they seem occasionally unreasonable, then consider this: When talking to either of them, probably the mother-in-law, about real and potential baby problems, rely on the pronoun *I*, not the pronoun *you*. In other words, say something like, "I don't think *I* want her to have that Popsicle while she's screaming," rather than, "If *you* give her that Popsicle, I will kill you." This is something you'll have to practice beforehand — by yourself. Just look in the mirror and say things like:

"I can change the diaper."

"I'd like to hold her for a few minutes."

"I'd rather try it this way."

"Thank you, but I'm thinking that maybe I should . . ."

The words *uncomfortable* and *unable* might also be helpful. For example: "I'll be uncomfortable if she gets that Popsicle while she's screaming." Or "I'll be unable to agree that she go with you and Pee-Pa to Las Vegas. I'm really sorry." Don't say: "The hell you say."

If your spouse *and* her parents share many baby-raising ideas that you strongly disagree with, then I suggest you read my next book — due in about eighteen months. It will be called *Day to Day in the Dark Recesses of a Cave*.

LETTERS TO BABY

Imagine — if you never got one — a letter written to you by your father before you were born (or soon after). I'll sprinkle throughout this book some that I wrote to my children from time to time.

Dear Little One,

This morning your pregnant mom and I walked on the beach, and like we've been doing lately, we found something for you. Today it was a starfish. Several times lately we've picked up shells for you. We've been thinking about different names for you, but we haven't come up with anything yet. About four days ago, your mother got so excited she called me from her cell phone (they are pretty new) and said, "I couldn't wait to tell you. I felt the baby move!"

Love,
Daddy

Clyde Edgerton is the author of ten novels, a memoir, and a new work, Papadaddy's Book for New Fathers, *from which this is excerpted by permission of the author. He teaches in the Creative Writing Department at UNCW.*

Illustration by Harry Blair

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49 Pipers Neck Road

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25 Backfin Point

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